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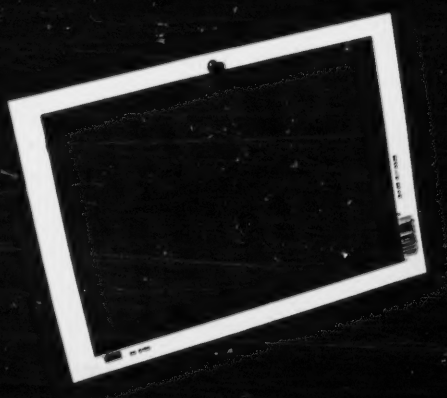

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LABOR SHORTAGE CRISIS:

How Practitioners Are Helping Companies Cope

PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL

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24 Labor Shortage Woes

Now that the "Baby Bust" generation is coming of working age, many organizations are finding themselves in a hiring pinch, and are employing innovative public relations programs to help attract new employees and keep existing ones.

By Meryl Davids

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A look at what public relations will have to do to fill its *own* new talent needs in the next decade.

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Corporate educational philanthropy, already on the upswing, will almost surely become more popular during the labor shortage because of its appeal to employees and the general public. *By Janet Dyer*

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Since opening a pioneering public relations management consulting firm 24 years ago, Chet Burger, APR, has counseled most of the largest firms and public relations departments in the country, helping them with problems and profits, structure and strategy, mergers and purges. This month, as Burger heads toward retirement, *PRJ* asked him to look back on his career and to look forward at the changes and challenges that will affect the field in the years ahead.

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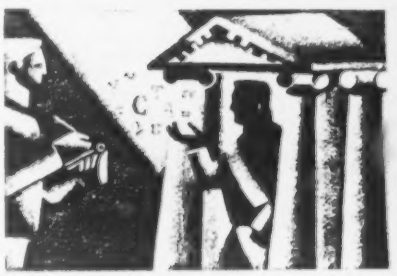

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John A. Pellegrino

INSIDE TRACK

SIGNING IN

THIS being my first official issue as Editor of *Public Relations Journal*, and my first "Inside Track" column, I'd like to start by thanking all of you who have written or called to welcome me and to offer your support and encouragement.

Happily, I'll have an opportunity to meet many of you in person at the PRSA Annual Conference this month, as well as get to know you on a one-on-one basis over the next several months.

It's clear from your thoughtful comments that you read *Public Relations Journal* closely and very much consider it to be *your* magazine. These are the highest compliments that can be paid to a professional publication.

PRJ certainly made enormous strides forward under the direction of my predecessor, Michael Winkleman, and it's my intention, with the help of your continued input, to keep that momentum going full throttle.

So, if you've got an idea for an article that you would like to write, have a topic that you would like to see covered, or have a specialty, area of expertise, or viewpoint that you'd like to share—or, yes, even a complaint—we'd like to hear about it. Please send your note or article query to my attention.

By the way, before I move on to the content of this issue, I want to point out that the staff of *PRJ* deserves special credit for having maintained the high quality of the magazine during the transition period between editors.

Remember when the biggest labor recruitment problem for many companies was finding time to interview all of the qualified prospects? Well, if those days aren't yet over at your company and the companies of your clients, you can be pretty sure that they soon will be. Our cover story (page 24), written by executive editor Meryl Davids, gives a disturbing view of just how much of a problem the labor crunch already is for many organizations, and how increasingly widespread it will become over the next several years.

For both corp[illegible] public relations practitioners and counselors, however, the article offers good news: The labor shortage presents a major opportunity to shine by creatively helping top managment tackle the problem *before* it becomes crippling.

Reading about the inventive and varied tactics being applied by practitioners to situations ranging from fast-food chains to law firms may provide inspiration for programs that would address your own company's or clients' labor needs.

Elsewhere in this issue (page 12), Maureen Rubin, an attorney and associate professor of journalism at California State University, addresses the timely and often perplexing issue of whether or not it ever makes sense for practitioners to act as anonymous sources for the press.

Given a recent, possibly precedent-setting Minnesota case concerning this matter, even those of you who've been following a standard policy for years might well want to take a look at this piece. And the sensible, doable ways to minimize risk outlined by the author are must-reads for anyone who may have occasion to act as an unnamed source.

When it comes to management consulting for the field of public relations, no name is more well known or respected than that of Chet Burger. Now that Burger, who has never been known for pulling punches, is about to retire, we asked him to give his no-holds-barred assessment of where public relations managers are succeeding and failing, and how they'll need to improve to be ready for the challenges of the next decade. Send your own reactions to his opinions; we'll publish them in the next available issue.

—**Karlene Lukovitz**
Editor

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All these communications services do, of course, have the effect of keeping AARP in the public eye. But the association's strong presence on Capitol Hill has been perhaps the single biggest factor in establishing its name recognition and clout. This year alone, AARP has earmarked more than $8 million for lobbying efforts on behalf of older Americans; and its 40-member public relations department logs more than 50 calls per day from reporters wanting the organization's views on topical issues. AARP buttresses these efforts with fact sheets, titled "Where We Stand," which are sent to public opinion leaders, political leaders, and its own members.

Holland emphasizes that "image is something you purchase; reputation is something you earn—and AARP's reputation is pristine." Nevertheless, the scope and aggressiveness of its lobbying efforts have generated some criticism along the way. A staff member of the House Select Committee on Aging had this to say about AARP last September in *The New York Times:* "As a resource, Congress turns to [AARP] first on a wide range of issues . . . but it's a little like being friendly with an 800-pound gorilla."

As the number of Americans at retirement age grows, AARP's most difficult public relations challenge may be managing its larger-than-life image and achieving its goals while not alienating those who don't belong to its roster. In other words, it will need to show that it's a gentle giant.

Janet Dyer

Jan Dyer is a freelance writer based in Suffern, NY.

Talking Research

ALTHOUGH three out of four public relations professionals agree that research is a necessary part of the public relations process, public relations research and measurement is still mostly informal, unscientific, and rarely done, according to a new survey by Ketchum Public Relations.

While 93 percent of the respondents say that research is important, most agree that, in reality, public relations research "is still talked about much more than it is done."

The national survey was conducted via a questionnaire mailed to 945 randomly selected senior public relations executives, counselors, and academicians. More than half (58 percent) of the 253 responses received were from public relations executives at corporations, financial institutions, or other businesses; 15 percent were from public relations counselors or suppliers; and the remainder came from nonprofit organizations, associations, professional societies, and academia.

Value isn't questioned

The majority of respondents (57 percent) agree that it is indeed possible to measure public relations outcomes, as well as impact and effectiveness, in precise terms. According to Walter K. Lindenmann, APR, Ketchum's director of research, denying that research can be measured is one of the two main impediments that slow the growth of public relations research; the other is lack of funds.

According to the survey, three out of four practitioners conduct research at least "occasionally" before planning and developing a new program or strategy, but only about one quarter (24 percent) conduct such preliminary research "very frequently." Practitioners are least likely to use research (such as quick polls—to informally gauge public opinion) when a crisis strikes; only 9 percent say they do this "very frequently." Slightly more than half (58 percent), though, say they at least occasionally monitor or track their activities so that direction can be changed or modified.

Literature searches and information retrievals are particularly favored: 34 percent of the respondents use them frequently and 47 percent occasionally. While communications audits are also a favorite for occasional use (59 percent), they are used frequently by just 16 percent of those surveyed. Publicity tracking or media monitoring, telephone and mail surveys, and focus groups were, in that order, the next three most popular forms of research.

Specialists: Research fans

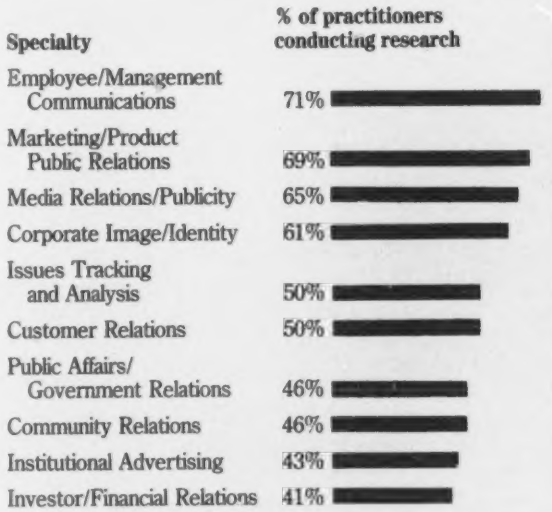
Although research still seems to be a low priority on the whole, it is increasingly popular among certain specialties—the 55 responding counselors, academicians, and suppliers said that, over the last three years, their research time has expanded either moderately (24 percent) or dramatically (53 percent).

More than half (55 percent) of those surveyed agree that research volume will continue to increase, but they were not asked when, or why, they believe this. Lindenmann notes that research must become more sophisticated and practitioners must become better educated in research techniques before they turn to it more often.

Maureen McGee

Maureen McGee is an editorial intern at PRJ.

Which specialties are researched most?



While investor/financial relations is the area least likely to be researched, nearly two-thirds of respondents surveyed by Ketchum Public Relations say employee/management communications has been studied within the past two years.

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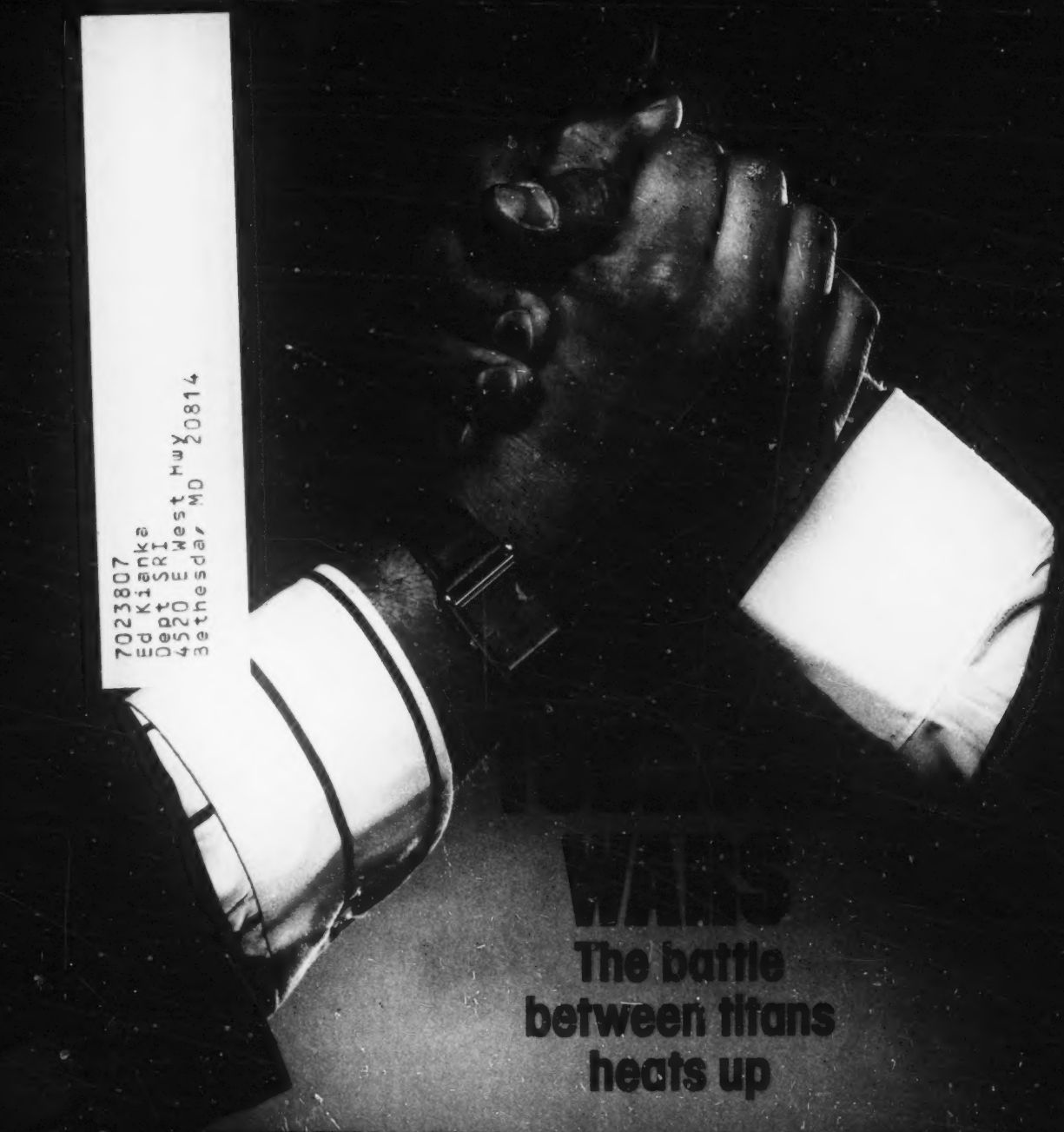

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WARS

The battle between titans heats up

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Though the battle between smoking and anti-smoking forces has been around for hundreds of years, 1988 has seen the clash escalate as never before. A look at the most recent public relations strategies being employed by the mega-forces on each side. *By Joe Cosco*

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Counting clips—long the mainstay of public relations program evaluation—is finally giving way to more sophisticated research techniques, ranging from computerized analysis of media coverage to attempts to measure impact on sales. A research professional presents an overview of cutting-edge methods taking hold in the field. *By Walter Lindenmann, APR*

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FEEDBACK

Lessons unlearned

Your story on the Suzuki Samurai crisis (September, page 19) is evidence that no matter how much has changed in the last 20 years, public relations is often mired in a time warp.

The crisis planners at Suzuki had a perfect model to draw upon in responding to the roll-over charge. Back in the sixties, an unknown young lawyer named Ralph Nader wrote a book titled *Unsafe at Any Speed*, which alleged serious safety flaws in the then-popular General Motors Corvair. GM responded precisely the way Suzuki did —with a slashing counter-offensive in which all allegations were denied and the integrity of the messenger was impugned.

At the time, I wrote to General Motors with a piece of friendly advice: hire the young lawyer and make him Director of Quality Control. General Motors chose to continue in its chosen path, until Nader became a national hero. The company was ultimately forced to discontinue the Corvair despite its public relations efforts.

It is troubling to see how little the automotive industry (and some public relations counselors) learn from experience. True, it's a bit late now to offer Nader a job. But there were other comparable steps that Suzuki could have taken. Of course, they require a different mind-set.

First, public relations professionals need not instinctively strike out when clients or employers have been called to task. Public relations people are not mouthpieces or flacks. Hopefully, they are counselors with the responsibility to advise clients or employers which action is in their best long-term interests.

Second, it's important to operate on the principle that public relations and publicity are not synonymous. Good publicity results from good performance. When the performance is not up to par, no amount of aggressive publicity can overcome it.

Third, largely because of its own shortcomings, the business community does not enjoy the same credibility as do consumer organizations. In particular, *Consumer Reports* magazine is a national icon precisely because people (consumers) look to it as an impartial testing organization. In any contest between a corporation and *Consumer Reports*, the magazine is going to win. Suzuki did itself no good by asking the public to choose between its credibility and that of the magazine's.

Fourth, as Winston Churchill said, "It's better to jaw, jaw, jaw than war, war, war." If Suzuki did indeed believe that the magazine's findings were erroneous or biased, the way to prove it was not to cite its own tests. Suzuki should have contacted highly respected consumer experts in the automotive field and asked them to review the data and/or set up independently verifiable roll-over tests.

Suzuki really had nothing to lose by taking this approach. If the consumer advocates had declined to participate, they would have been painted as biased by the media. If the tests backed up Suzuki's claims, the crisis would have ended long ago. And, if the independent tests showed that *Consumer Reports* was right, Suzuki would be no worse off than it is now. In fact, it would have gained credibility by being willing to submit to the tests instead of reacting defensively. If the vehicle is, indeed, a safety hazard, Suzuki will have to pull if off the market anyway.

Unfortunately, many practitioners believe in what I call "macho management." They look at any effort to reach out and build bridges to adversaries as soft-headed, or even socialistic. Yet this is the best way to help shape change instead of being swept away by it.

Paul S. Forbes, APR
President
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MANAGEMENT

Financial Skills: Missing in Action

Although new public relations managers tend to have good written and oral communication skills, they are lacking in other such important leadership skills as planning and organization, problem solving and decision making, goal setting and prioritizing, time management, analysis, and financial planning and budgeting. These are some of the findings of a recent survey of public relations practitioners conducted by Judy VanSlyke Turk, APR, director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Kent State University.

In the survey, practitioners were asked to identify management skills and perspectives that they believe are essential, and to indicate which of those skills and perspectives are present or lacking in practitioners making the shift into management. The survey defined management skills as falling into two categories: leadership and "people-management" skills.

Questionnaires were mailed to 2,400 practitioners (all of the members of the Public Relations Society of America in Arkansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas) in December 1987 and January 1988. Completed questionnaires were returned by 561 public relations professionals.

Talking a good line

Communication skills are definitely perceived as being the most important leadership skills for public relations practitioners. Approximately 96 percent of respondents indicated that oral communication is important to effective public relations management, and 94 percent said written communication is vital. Apparently, these are also the skills in which most practitioners new to management's ranks excel: Only 16 percent of respondents said oral skills are lacking among new public relations managers within their organizations, and only 17 percent said that written skills are lacking.

But, while most (56 percent) respondents also ranked financial and budgeting skills as quite important, 67 percent said that these skills are lacking in new managers. The financial area is the only one in which a majority of respondents indicated that new public relations managers fall short.

Problem solving, decision making, and planning and organizing were cited as important by 91 percent of respondents. However, 46 percent of respondents say new managers lack problem-solving and decision-making skills and 40 percent lack planning and organizing abilities.

Respondents ranked people-management skills in the following order of importance: delegating (80 percent said this is vital), supervising (75 percent), negotiating (70 percent), group process skills (69 percent), coaching and counseling (67 percent), staff development skills (63 percent), and performance evaluation skills (53 percent). However, respondents were not asked whether or not new public relations managers are proficient in any of these areas.

Marketing ups and downs

In addition to leadership and people-management skills, respondents were asked to rank the importance of various other functions and issues that are part of a public relations manager's role. Respondents put the most emphasis on the marketing function (rated somewhat or extremely important by 89 percent), followed by strategic planning (86 percent), ethical issues (76 percent), social

Leadership Skills

Skill	% Important	% Lacking
Oral communication	96	16
Written communication	94	17
Planning and organizing	91	40
Problem solving and decision making	91	46
Goal setting and prioritizing	83	44
Time management	80	39
Analytical skills	71	40
Financial and budgeting skills	56	67

Communication skills are of paramount importance for success as a new public relations manager, and most new managers have mastered these skills, according to a recent survey of practitioners. But new managers need to improve their financial, analytical, decision-making, and time-management skills, respondents say.

Function and Issue Understanding

Area or Issue	% Important	% Lacking
Marketing	89	34
Strategic planning	86	40
Ethical issues	76	18
Social responsibility considerations	73	21
Technological developments	59	35
First Amendment and other legal issues	37	30
Equal opportunity employment requirements	33	34
Labor relations	27	41

In order to be effective, public relations managers need to understand marketing, strategic planning, and ethics, practitioners say. Technology and labor relations are viewed as being less important.

responsibility issues (73 percent), and technological developments (59 percent). These were followed in importance by legal issues such as First Amendment considerations (37 percent), the equal employment requirement (33 percent), and labor relations (27 percent).

"People-Management" Skills

Skill	% Important
Delegating	80
Supervising	74
Negotiating	70
Group-process skills	69
Coaching and counseling	67
Staff-development skills	63
Performance-evaluation skills	53

Respondents ranked delegating, supervising, and negotiating as the most important "people-management" skills.

Among these functions and issues, new public relations managers, according to the survey, are most lacking in labor relations skills (41 percent say new managers fall short in this area), technological developments (35 percent), and marketing (34 percent).

Back to the blackboard

According to the public relations managers surveyed, new managers would be better prepared for their roles if they learned more business and non-communication skills in college. "Public relations [undergraduate] education successfully imparts communications skills at the expense of other skills and perspectives that also are essential to effective management," concludes Van Slyke. "Public relations educators should not default on their obligation to their students by 'passing the buck.' These skills must be taught as part of the public relations curriculum."

As a group, the survey respondents are relatively young (the largest subgroup was between 35 and 44 years old); have 13 years of public relations experience; have on average been in their current positions for 5½ years; and work in relatively large, privately owned, public relations counseling firms or corporations.

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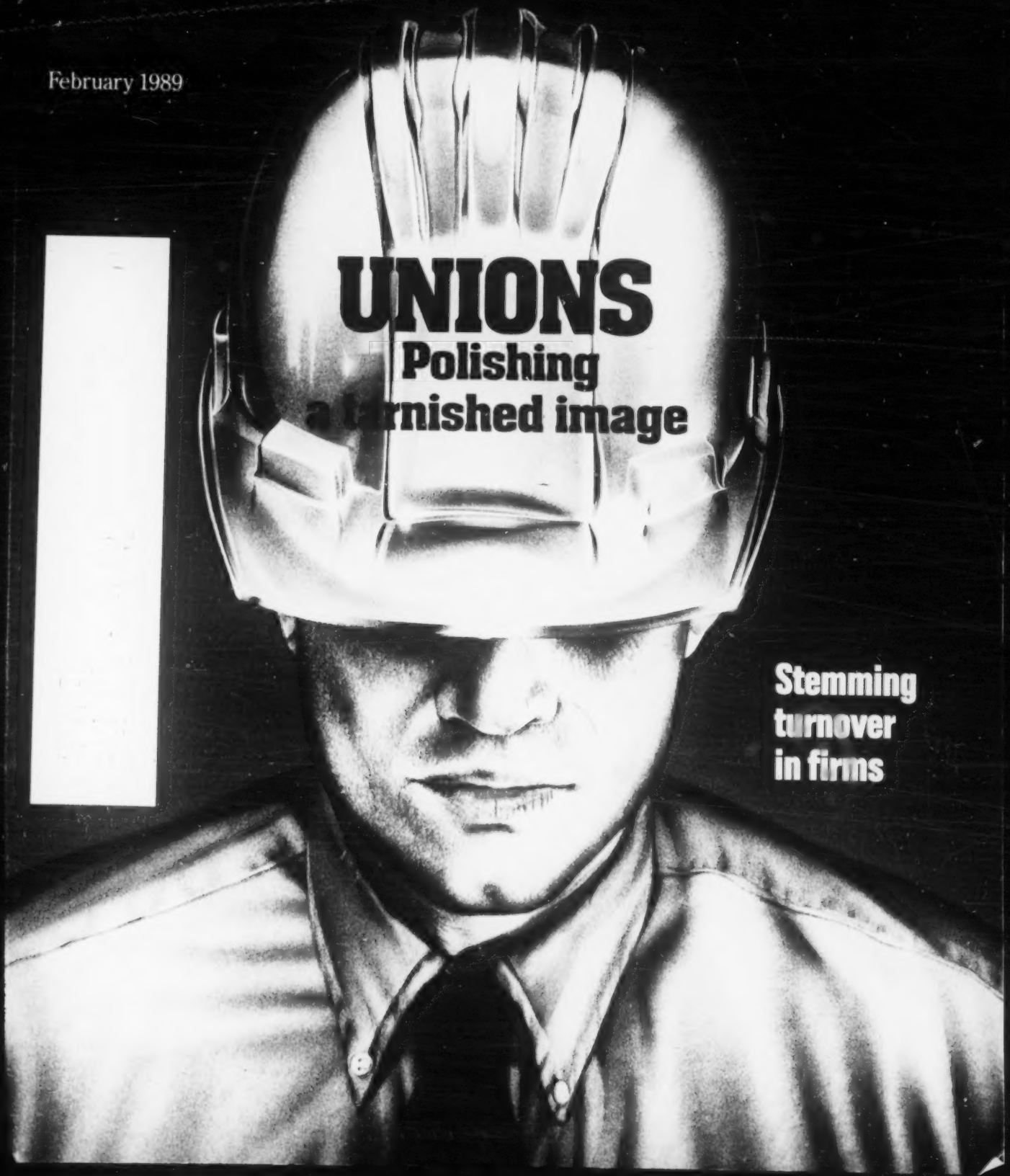

UNIONS
Polishing a tarnished image

Stemming turnover in firms

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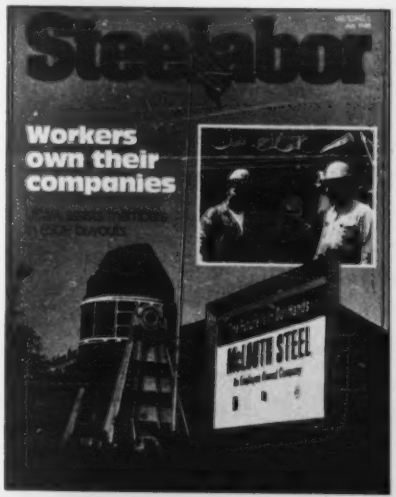
FEATURES

17 Unions: Polishing a Tarnished Image
In the seventies, after decades of growing power and size, American labor unions were hit by a backlash of such major proportions that many wondered if they could survive. But in the last few years, the unions have been radically changing their approach from one of confrontation to cooperation—and learning to use public relations to improve their relations with employers, prospective members, and the public at large. *By Joe Cosco*

22 Stemming Turnover in Firms
Public relations firms live or die on the talent and experience of their professional staffs. Yet, some have as much as 50 percent staff turnover per year. A recruiter in the public relations field, who's also wrestled with the problem as a firm human relations manager and as a practitioner, offers his assessment of what must be done to begin reducing excessive turnover. *By Aaron S. Glazier*



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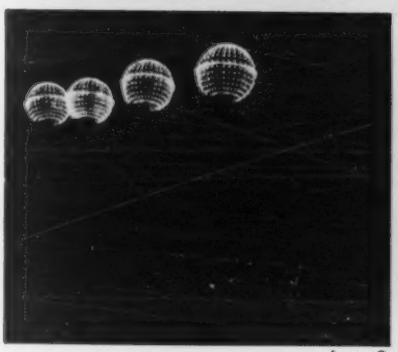

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ered, as well as replacement of standard parts."

Time called this "perhaps the most generous auto warranty ever." Yet, Yugo's public relations efforts for the warranty so far have had to be limited to press releases sent to automotive and business media (print and broadcast), and a brochure on the warranty given to dealers for distribution to customers.

Another major development for 1989 is Yugo's spring introduction of the Cabrio, an $8,300 convertible. Again, however, aside from the standard fare of press conferences to introduce the car, press kits, and press road tests, Yugo has been able to do little on the public relations front. Its only venturesome strategy so far has been hiring product placement brokers in Hollywood to try and get the Cabrio featured in movies and TV series.

"It's a long shot," says Ciminera. "You're not sure how good the scripts will be, or how much exposure the car will get. Still, we think the convertible will be the start of that kind of exposure for us."

This year will also see still more improvements in Yugo's GV, GVL, and GVX models, including an optional electronic multipoint fuel-injection system, three-speed automatic transmission, and facelifts for these models. Public relations, once again, is for now limited to basic media relations.

The bottom line, Ciminera concedes, is that, because of the buyout, public relations, marketing, and advertising campaigns for 1989 will not tie into any "traditional promotional schedule," and Yugo America may have to wait for its 1990 models to get back on track.

Varied sponsorship efforts

Though new public relations programs for 1989 have been minimal in most areas, Yugo spokespersons point out that in recent years the company has initiated two major sponsorship programs, and is now developing new ones.

In 1987 and '88, Yugo sponsored entries in the 8,000-mile One Lap of America road rally. "We entered this rally because we felt the little car needed to prove to the public how reliable it can be," explains Ciminera. "In '87, it tied for third with an Audi that cost eight times as much. We'll have to decide whether to enter the rally again in 1989." Some Yugo owners were inspired to enter their cars in smaller rallies around the country, Ciminera says, but One Lap of America did not generate much publicity for Yugo. "Any ex-

Continued on page 11

Survey confirms practitioner/ management goal conflicts

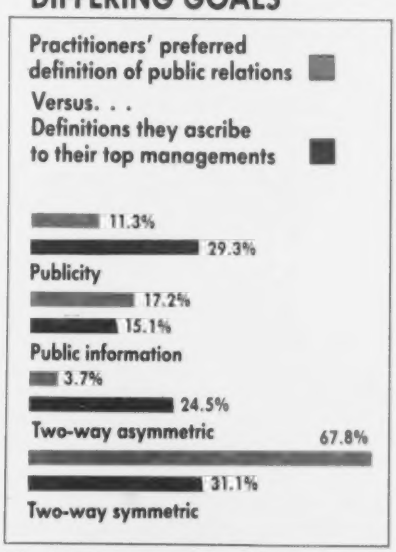
Two groups have differing definitions of public relations

Although it would seem that an organization's top management and its public relations department would have to share common goals in order to succeed, that sharing appears not to be the case in many organizations across the country, according to a new study presented by James Bissland to the PRSA Educators Section at the association's national conference in November.

A survey of 557 practitioners revealed that 56 percent believe that the overall role they see for their organization's public relations differs from that preferred by their management.

The study also found that practitioners whose view of public relations is not aligned with their management's report lower overall job satisfaction.

Bissland and Terry Lynn Rentner, both of Bowling Green University, in Bowling Green, Ohio, sent a four-page questionnaire to randomly selected members of PRSA and the International Association of Business Communicators. Among other questions, practitioners were asked what they believe their role should be in their organizations. The choices offered were: to publicize their wares in any way possible (press agentry model); to disseminate information truthfully and accurately (public information model); to persuade the public to agree with their company's views (two-way asymmetric model); or to develop mutual understanding between their management and the public (two-way symmetric model). The respondents were also asked to indicate which view they believe their management holds.



Nearly 56 percent of practitioners recently surveyed believe that the goal they set for public relations differs from the one their management prefers. Practitioners who feel those goals are not in synch suffer lower morale and less job satisfaction than those whose goals mesh more easily.

"When we undertook the study, we were interested in answering two distinct hypotheses," Bissland said: "Is there a conflict between practitioners' definitions of public relations and their managements', and what difference does it make if there is?"

Fully two-thirds of respondents said they prefer the mutual-understanding approach, but only 31 percent said their managers would agree with this definition of public relations. Most indicated that they believe their managers are primarily interested in public relations as persuasion, information dissemination, or propaganda. All in all, just 44 percent of respondents said that they felt their goals and their managements' goals were clearly in sync (see chart).

Bissland noted that managers themselves were not surveyed on their definitions of public relations. However, he maintains that it is significant that such a large percentage of practitioners feel that there is conflict with management.

Low morale is by-product

Not only was morale significantly lower among those who are at odds with top management, but many such respondents indicated that they would not have taken the job if they had known then what they know now. Some even claimed that they would not have chosen a public relations career.

"This raises many additional questions," Bissland concluded, "such as, how do practitioners and their managements cope with this tension, and to what extent do practitioners really practice the definition that they preach?" But, he observed: "There is a definite need for more mutual understanding. Public relations's need for better public relations must start in the workplace."

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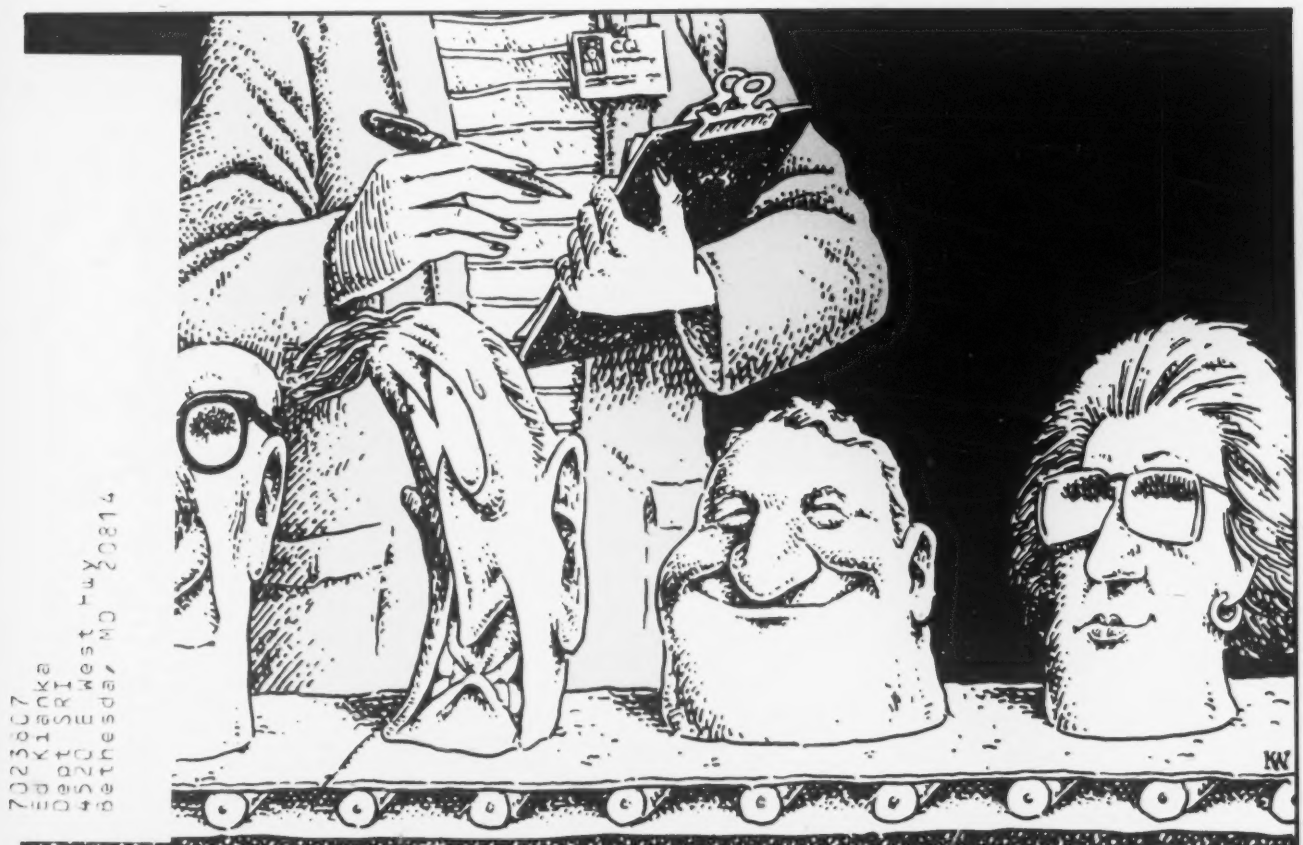

Quality control ('kwäl·ət·ē kən·'trōl) *n*: an aggregate of activities designed to ensure high quality in products or services.

QUALITY CONTROL

Translating ideal to real

PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL

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FEATURES

18 Public Relations Quality Control: Translating Ideal to Real

An increasing number of firms and corporate public relations departments (and not *just* the mega-operations) are using quality control techniques in an effort to raise the quality level and consistency of everything from press releases to counseling procedures. Practitioners who are grappling with translating QC theory into procedures that yield results in the white-collar public relations workplace share the ins and outs of their own systems—and their thoughts on the opportunities and limitations posed by QC. *By Joan Reisman*

26 Why Stay Independent?

In a public relations marketplace where it sometimes seems that firms that are "owned" have daunting competitive advantages, why do some public relations entrepreneurs continue to pass up lucrative acquisition offers? An independent counselor gets some frank answers from entrepreneurs as to why they've so far resisted the "urge to merge"—and what might make them change their minds. *By Alfred Geduldig*

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Peter Harrison

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Cover Illustration: *Ken Westphal*

Issues of control

WHEN you get right down to it, there's nothing new about the basic premise of quality control in professional circles. No business can become successful, or stay that way for long, if its management isn't employing effective quality control—even if the methods used aren't labelled as such. What's new, however, are the increasingly formal efforts in public relations and other white-collar, professional fields to analyze and attempt to adapt to their own needs the QC principles and techniques that have been developed and honed for years within the manufacturing sector.

In exploring the status of public relations quality control, writer/consultant Joan Reisman—a former account supervisor for Burson-Marstellar and product manager for Pfizer Laboratories—found that the approaches being used are as creative and diverse as the field itself *(page 18)*. There are, of course, many other innovative QC techniques and systems out there, and we'd welcome your letters, if you'd like to share your own solutions or opinions on the subject.

"What price independence?" was the question recently posed by independent counselor Alfred Geduldig to several independent public relations firm owners *(page 26)*. His intro—a tongue-in-cheek, futuristic scenario—is his way of broaching the serious and very timely topic of the many factors that successful independents must weigh when considering a growing number of acquisition offers.

Among the provocative questions raised by the piece is how to differentiate an independent from an "owned" firm in the first place. While it's common in this field to equate "owned" with "owned by an ad agency," Geduldig's definition centers not on the nature of the parent company's business, but on whether a firm is *"owned and managed by the people who work in (it)."* On this basis, he questions whether Shandwick, usually listed as the largest independent, is really an independent at all. Although it is strictly a public relations operation, the author maintains that its parent company is in essence a "holding company" or "conglomerate owner," and that neither it nor the individual units within its group meet his definition of an independent.

Shandwick, as would be expected, has its own views on the matter. Charles Jones, president of Shandwick North America, maintains that the giant is indeed an independent because its "whole thrust is PR," in contrast to operations in which "PR is subservient to some other marketing discipline." Jones points out that the largest single owner of Shandwick, Chairman/CEO Peter Gummer, has spent his career in journalism and public relations, and, since founding Shandwick in 1974, has continued to build it from the standpoint of a public relations executive. Gummer, Jones maintains, hires top executives who act as counselors to firms within the group rather than make decisions for them.

"Shandwick's publicly-stated goal is to be the best PR firm with the largest geographic span and span of disciplines," he stresses, asserting that "far from threatening their independence," joining Shandwick is a choice made by firms who recognize that public relations is becoming national and international in its scope, and that joining together will bring them business that they could not get on their own. "Even though we as an organization have mainly been concentrating on building our distribution in the last few years, there have been almost 100 client-initiated referrals that have benefitted agencies within our network. Now, we're in a new stage. We're investing all of our profits, after payment of dividends, into developing new business. There's nothing wrong with having financial goals, as long as resources are invested back into the business."

What's your opinion? Can a group like Shandwick truly be considered an independent? Does it matter? Watch *PRJ*'s "Feedback" column for your responses.

And speaking of responses . . .

PRJ's Annual Salary Survey, now in its fourth year, has become a valuable point of reference for our readers. We urge you to help make this year's survey just as successful and useful, by filling out the questionnaire facing this column. Look for results and analysis in our June issue.

—Karlene Lukovitz, Editor

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Writing remains essential practitioner skill, survey affirms

Various types require nearly 40 percent, on average, of time

Even today, as public relations moves beyond publicity into such areas as issues management, counseling, and marketing support, some form of writing is integral to nearly every aspect of public relations practice, according to a new study conducted by Frank R. Stansberry, APR, manager of guest affairs for Coca-Cola USA.

The study is among the first to attempt to quantify writing functions in the field. It also outlines how much time is spent on general public relations activities.

Stansberry sent questionnaires to a random sample of 500 practitioners listed in PRSA's 1988–'89 membership directory. The 198 respondents have an average of 12.2 years' experience in corporations, firms, non-profit organizations, or government, and nearly all (93 percent) are college graduates.

On average, respondents spend 36.5 percent of their work week on writing specifically for public relations purposes, exclusive of writing for other tasks, such as business administration. Nearly all respondents said that they do some writing, regardless of their specialty or type of employer. The *amount* of time spent writing does not vary significantly according to level of professional experience, once practitioners have passed the two-year point in their careers.

Releases top the list

Writing news releases occupies 7.1 percent of the total time of the average respondent, or 19.5 percent of his or her writing time. Writing for internal publications accounts for 5.9 percent of total time, or 16.1 percent of writing time. Writing done in connection with management counseling requires 4.3 percent of total time, or 11.1 percent of writing time.

Writing speeches, community relations plans and programs, and research reports each accounts for more than three percent of the average respondent's work time, while writing advertisement copy,

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new business proposals, and reports resulting from issues monitoring each required between 2.5 percent and 3.0 percent of respondents' time. Investor relations/financial public relations writing requires 1.1 percent of the total work time, or 3.0 percent of writing time.

Experience determines content

Respondents with less than 10 years' experience primarily write advertisements and news releases and handle internal publications, while those in the middle years in terms of experience (11 to 20 years) are in charge of issue monitoring. Senior personnel (more than 20 years' experience) are more likely to write speeches and pieces related to counseling management and communication with the financial community.

Less experienced respondents (0–5 years of experience) make up 21.2 percent of the sample, but account for 33.3 percent of advertising copy; 29.4 percent of community relations plans and reports; and 26.8 percent of internal publication writing. Those working in their sixth through tenth years comprise 26.8 percent of the sample but do 36.4 percent of the internal publication writing and more than 28 percent of the writing of news releases and new business proposals.

Time devoted to writing tasks

Writing task	% total time	% writing time
1. Releases	7.1	19.5
2. Internal publications	5.9	16.1
3. Counseling reports	4.3	11.1
4. Speeches	3.5	9.5
5. Community relations plans	3.2	8.8
6. Research reports	3.1	8.5
7. Advertising copy	2.9	7.9
8. New business proposals	2.8	7.7
9. Issues monitoring reports	2.7	7.3
10. Financial reports	1.1	3.0

Press releases remain integral to many practitioners' jobs, but so are a variety of more complex written communications.

Time devoted to various responsibilities

Function	% time	% active*
Product publicity	11.6	85
Media relations	11.0	87
Business administration	10.4	75
Internal communications	9.0	72
Management counseling	8.7	68
Community relations	8.0	68
Research	5.4	67
Advertising	5.0	53
Issues monitoring	4.8	54
Speeches	4.7	67
New business development	4.7	45
Government relations	4.1	43
Entertaining	3.9	57
Development/fund raising	2.2	23
Investor/financial relations	2.1	23
Formal education	1.6	23
Other responsibilities	3.0	NA

* percent of sample indicating some time on function

An overview of time spent on various public relations activities, most of which involve at least some writing component.

Those in the 11-to-20-year span make up another 26.8 percent of the sample, but write 32.5 percent of reports concerning issues monitoring. Senior practitioners (24.7 percent) write 57 percent of financial reports, 40 percent of management counseling documents and speeches, and 28 percent of research reports.

Defining a varied role

Stansberry also asked respondents to indicate how much time they spend on various types of public relations responsibilities, without regard to the writing component in each responsibility.

On average, respondents indicated that product publicity functions and media relations take up 11.6 percent and 11 percent of their average work week, respectively. Business administration—managing a department or firm—takes up another 10 percent; internal communications and management counseling, nine percent, and community relations work, eight percent.

"Although public relations is still firmly tied to its product publicity roots, professionals are beginning to move past simply doing communications tasks and into management of the public relations function," comments Stansberry, noting that business administration and management counseling are both within the top five responsibilities.

Practitioners involved in specific writing tasks

Writing task	% involved
1. Releases	70.7
2. Publications	58.6
3. Speeches	56.6
4. Counseling reports	51.5
5. Research reports	51.0
6. Community relations plans	48.5
7. Advertising copy	42.0
8. Issues reports	38.9
9. New business proposals	32.8
10. Financial reports	14.6

More than half of those surveyed are involved in writing counseling reports.

Twenty-nine percent of respondents work for corporations, 30 percent for public relations firms, 20 percent for nonprofits, and 11 percent for the government. Nearly half (49 percent) characterize themselves as generalists, 33 percent as policy makers, 12 percent as writers/producers, and six percent as media relations specialists. □

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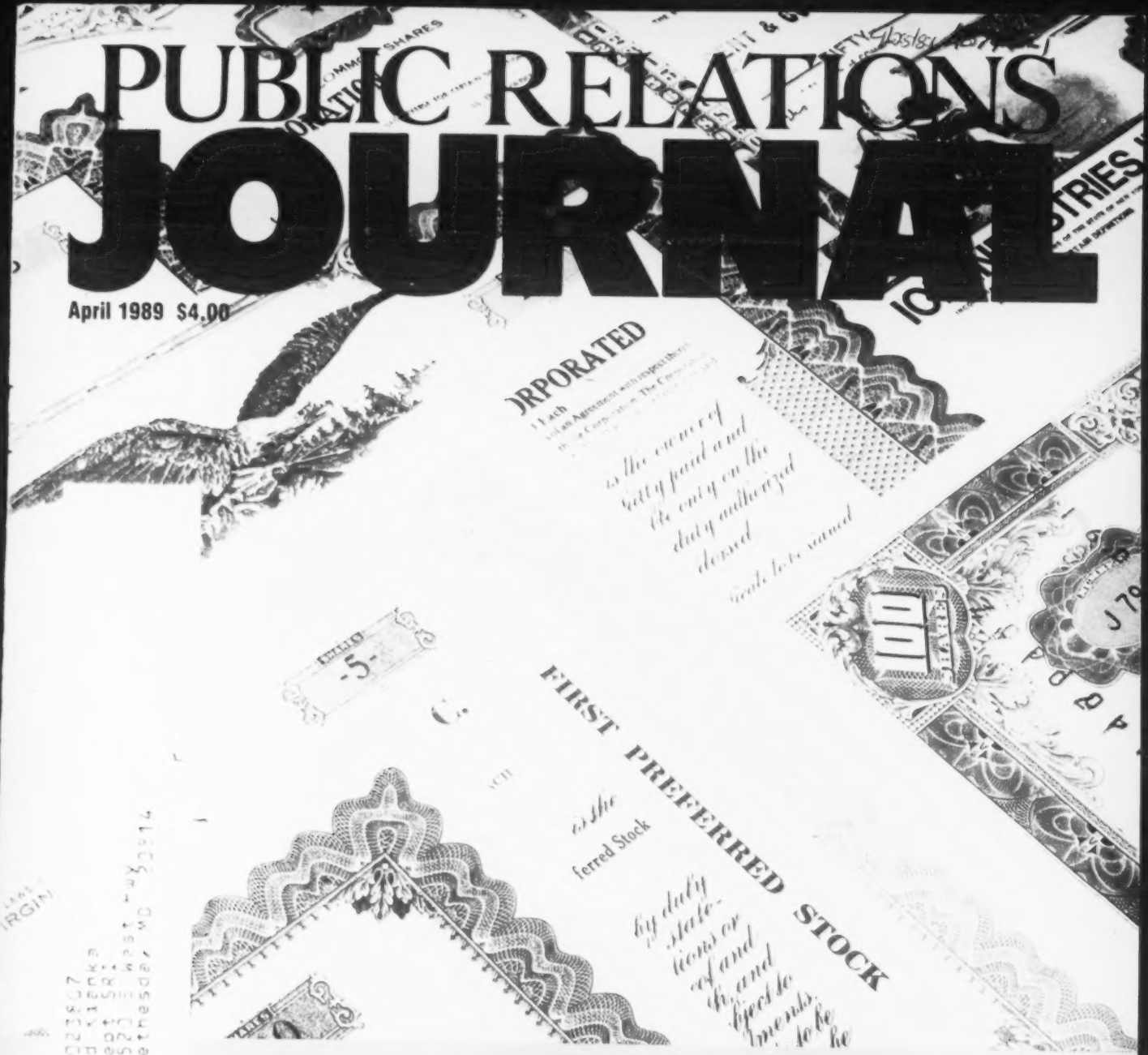
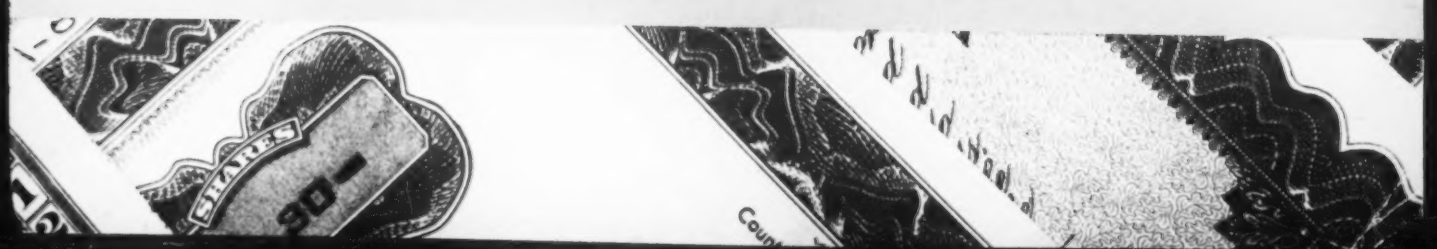


How Now, IR?

Coping with the topsy-turvy world of post-crash investor relations

Videoconferencing Comes Down To Earth



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BRIEFINGS

Restructuring: Good and bad news for employee communications

Value, responsibilities of role are increasing, but resources are fixed, new survey reveals

Competitive pressures and corporate restructuring are rapidly expanding the roles of employee communications executives in implementing corporate objectives, according to a comprehensive study recently released by the Conference Board.

This greater responsibility and enhanced status, however, has brought with it pressure to accomplish more with the same—or fewer—resources.

Corporate communicators now say that their top four employee relations responsibilities are improving morale, informing employees about internal changes and new strategies, explaining benefit plans, and helping to make employees more productive and quality-conscious.

"Nowhere is the impact of restructuring more evident than in the rising responsibility of corporate communications units," comments Kathryn Troy, author of the study, which surveyed communications executives at 281 leading U.S. businesses. "Increasingly, employees are demanding better information about their firm's performance and future direction. Virtually all those surveyed see these trends intensifying during the 1990's."

Doing more with less

Since 1984, more than two-thirds of the organizations of those surveyed have undergone major restructurings. Almost half have had substantial staff reductions, and about 45 percent have been involved in merger and acquisition activities. Sixty percent of the respondents from manufacturing firms and 45 percent from service companies say their employee communications missions have changed significantly in the past five years.

The result, according to corporate communicators, is that they are under increasing pressure to "do more with less."

Currently, the median staff size of those surveyed is three full-time professionals and one part-time professional. Almost three-quarters of respondents report that

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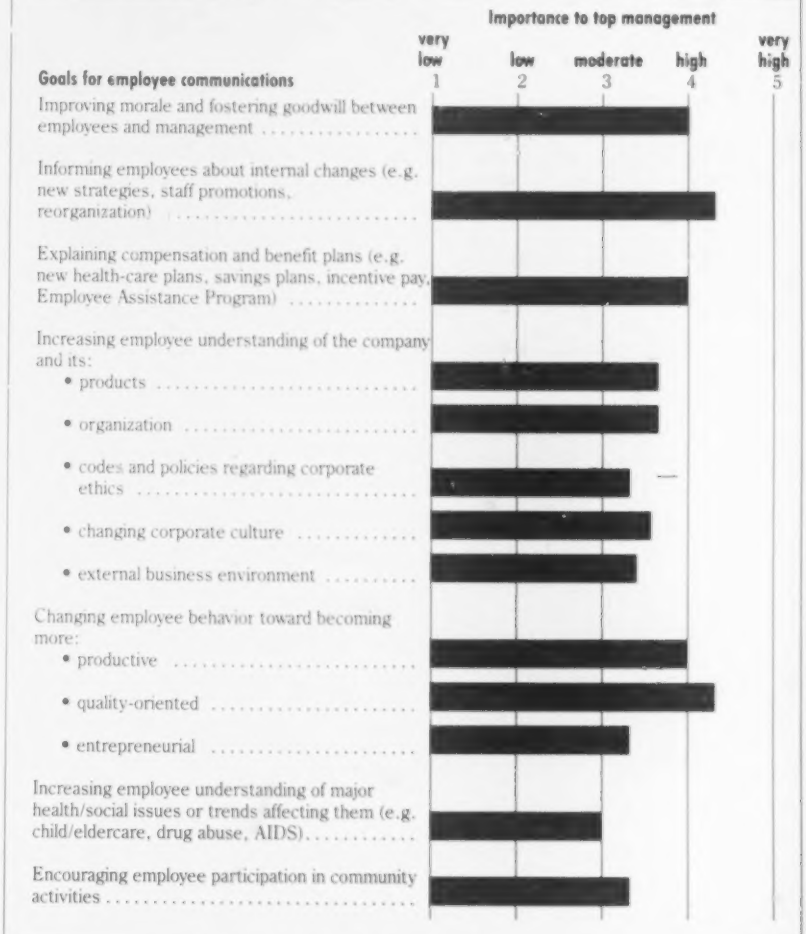
Employee communicators assess top management's priorities


Importance to top management
very low
low
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very high
1
2
3
4
5
Goals for employee communications
Improving morale and fostering goodwill between employees and management
Informing employees about internal changes (e.g. new strategies, staff promotions, reorganization)
Explaining compensation and benefit plans (e.g. new health-care plans, savings plans, incentive pay, Employee Assistance Program)
Increasing employee understanding of the company and its:
• products
• organization
• codes and policies regarding corporate ethics
• changing corporate culture
• external business environment
Changing employee behavior toward becoming more:
• productive
• quality-oriented
• entrepreneurial
Increasing employee understanding of major health/social issues or trends affecting them (e.g. child/eldercare, drug abuse, AIDS)
Encouraging employee participation in community activities

Communicators continue to be responsible for boosting employee morale and enhancing management credibility. But management's top priorities, according to communicators, are explaining changes in the company and fostering quality.

Employee Communications

Continued from page 6

their staff size has remained the same or decreased. Almost 60 percent of respondents' departments are hiring freelancers to help them shoulder the increased workload. Nearly a quarter of respondents who have not used outside help expect to do so in the near future.

The specific projects now being handled by these executives include: an annual plan for employee communications (75 percent say they prepare one), which often becomes part of the corporate plan; communications audits (almost half report doing one recently); and employee surveys of the effectiveness of communication programs (60 percent conduct these).

New messages, media

Print is still dominant, when it comes to the medium chosen to convey management's messages to employees, the survey indicates. More than 90 percent of respondents are responsible for at least one periodical that goes to all employees. Half of respondents publish magazines for this purpose; newspapers and newsletters are each published by 40 percent. The median number of magazines published annually is five; newsletters and newspapers are published monthly. One-third of respondents put out a publication for one or more special employee groups.

The nature of these publications is definitely changing rapidly, however. "Communicators are now being asked to present serious business messages in employee publications," reports Troy. "Such tried-and-true staples as brides, babies and bowling scores are being replaced with talk of products, business strategies and competitive threat."

> "Increasingly, employee publications focus on products, strategies and competitive threat"

Companies are also using an increasing array of media to deliver their messages. Audiovisual media such as films, videos and slideshows are used by virtually all respondents, although they are still considered complementary to print. Newer technologies, such as desktop publishing and electronic messaging, are now used by one-third of communications executives surveyed.

There is also a strong trend toward holding more face-to-face meetings between managers and employees. Seventy-five percent of respondents say their companies conduct such meetings, and 70 percent say the number of these meetings has increased recently.

Who responded?

Questionnaires were mailed to 1,020 corporations, including the 500 largest manufacturers and 500 largest service companies included in the Fortune 500 1986 listing.

Three quarters of responding companies are of a financial size of more than $1 billion; about 10 percent have less than $500 million in sales or assets. Fifty-five percent of respondents employ more than 10,000 people, while about 20 percent have fewer than 3,000 employees.

Among the executives responding, 30 percent have a title of vice president or above, 37 percent hold the title of assistant vice president or director, and 30 percent are managers or supervisors. Two-thirds of the executives are in communications or a function with a similar designation. Another 30 percent are evenly distributed between public relations and the public (or corporate) affairs function. The human resources area accounts for about 5 percent, with the remainder distributed among a range of other functions. □

Selecting media to meet key communications goals

Goals	mgmt. letters/ bulletins	brochures/ manuals	newsletters/ mags.	bulletin bd. postings	payroll inserts	AVI video prod.	electronic messaging	meetings
Improving employee morale/fostering goodwill between employees, management	68%	29%	90%	46%	11%	64%	15%	75%
Informing employees about internal changes	88	15	86	53	5	37	18	62
Increasing employee understanding of the company and its:								
• products	30	45	83	16	1	50	9	39
• organization	68	24	84	32	1	35	11	44
• codes and policies regarding corporate ethics	61	53	51	13	3	22	4	37
• changing corporate culture	45	19	76	9	2	42	6	50
• external business environment (e.g. competition, regulation)	48	10	81	10	7	30	6	47
Changing employee behavior toward becoming more:								
• productive	53	19	84	25	3	52	5	66
• quality-oriented	52	28	85	24	2	49	6	68
• entrepreneurial	28	7	54	8	1	26	3	45
Explaining compensation and benefits	66	85	72	39	32	49	6	70
Increasing employee understanding of major health or social issues or trends that affect them	36	34	76	22	8	25	2	44
Encouraging employee participation in community activities	41	16	74	26	3	22	2	27

Source: The Conference Board

The consensus among employee communications executives surveyed appears to be that AV is a complement to print communiques. Print is viewed as being best for delivering detailed information.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

48770-1

Salary Survey

Where do you fit in?

PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL

June 1989 Vol. 45 No. 6

FEATURES

17 ***PRJ*'s Fourth Annual Salary Survey: median salary at $39,400; gender gap still lives**

What's the median salary for your age, experience, sex? What are practitioners in firms, industrial manufacturing, utilities, health care, financial, government and other types of organizations earning? How well do the specialties pay—investor relations, public affairs, marketing, employee relations, corporate communications, issues management, *et al?* Find out in our just completed annual survey of *PRJ* readers. *Nicholas J. Tortorello and Keith Barnes*

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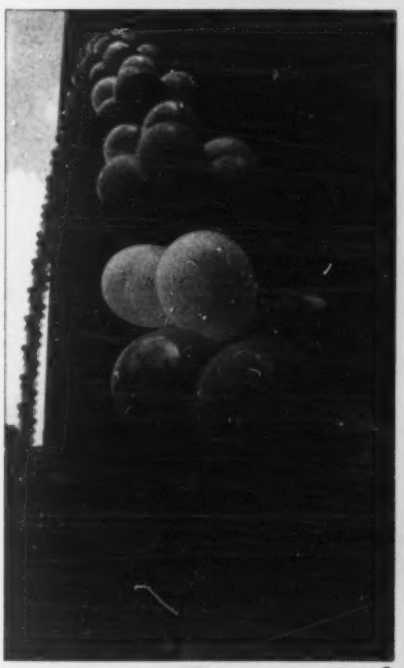
8 Summary annual report insert in *WSJ* "gets the word out" • Europe 1992: a threat to mid-sized firms? • Educators rank public relations programs • Releasing balloons now a publicity bust • Field should promote public relations' ability to out-perform advertising • CEOs rate media's business coverage • Resources



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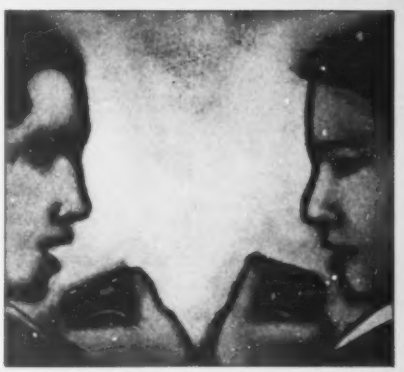
Improving your small organization's image *Richard T. Cole*



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Cover Photograph:
Jay Brousseau/Image Bank

Cashing in

In this field or any other, salary surveys are among the most anticipated and closely read type of feature. It's human nature to want to know what other people are earning (particularly those in the same position), and it's helpful both for management reference and individual career-planning purposes to have such information. Therefore, although I have no hard data to back this up, I'd wager that salary surveys are easily among the most torn-out and dog-eared types of features, as well.

Such surveys can also serve to give the field as a whole one type of periodic touch point on its status and progress. However, in looking at results of any survey, it's important to put the numbers in context. Ours is not a random survey—it is self-selecting, based on responses from our readers to a questionnaire inserted in our March issue. This means that there is no way to statistically determine exactly how reflective it may be of the overall field or of a given break-out.

We had a healthy-sized sample (1,284 responses, representing a response rate of about 6 percent). And, the sample seems to be fairly reflective of the field's breakdown, at least by sex (54 percent of respondents are female). Although our median respondent age (between 37 and 38) seems somewhat lower than those of other recent industry salary surveys conducted by mail, the trends indicated are much the same: slow growth in overall median salaries and continuing gaps between the salaries of men and women at nearly every level of experience, age and title.

Still, it's best to remember before pulling out this survey as ammunition for your next review that it is indicative of basic trends within this sample, not a precise indicator of what your salary should be.

The area of crisis management is receiving more and more attention, for all-too-obvious reasons. The news media are filled with reports of crises ranging from environmental accidents, to food and drug tampering, to concerns about pesticides and preservatives, to terrorist attacks. All organizations, no matter how conscientious, must ask themselves not *if*, but *how* they may be affected by one or more frustratingly numerous and increasingly random crisis scenarios. No one likes to think about such eventualities, but a growing number of organizational leaders are realizing that facing the hard realities and planning for the worst is indeed the best way to avoid crises that can be avoided and minimize the damage of those that cannot.

Consequently, staff and firm counselors specializing in crisis management are becoming the not-so-unsung heroes at the center of a growing number of events. Some don't get their names in the papers. In many cases, they've done their jobs so well that a potentially serious crisis has been averted or so dissipated that it receives little media attention; in others, their best strategy is to work behind the scenes, counseling the top executive who's been designated as official spokesperson. Each time that these practitioners *do* turn up in the press as the experts who took well-reasoned action—and perhaps saved the day—the whole field of public relations gets a shot in the arm.

Either way, you can bet that talented crisis managers are stars as far as their managements and clients are concerned. And that may well be even more image-enhancing for the profession than public recognition.

All this is in the way of introducing our new, quarterly column on crisis management (*page 40*). We think it's going to be an exciting addition to the magazine, and we invite you to share case studies—particularly ones that may help others master a specific area of crisis management expertise or plan for a similar crisis.

—Karlene Lukovitz, Editor

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BRIEFINGS

Summary annual report insert in *WSJ* "gets the word out"

AMAX Inc. may be first company to use this dramatic format to attract investors

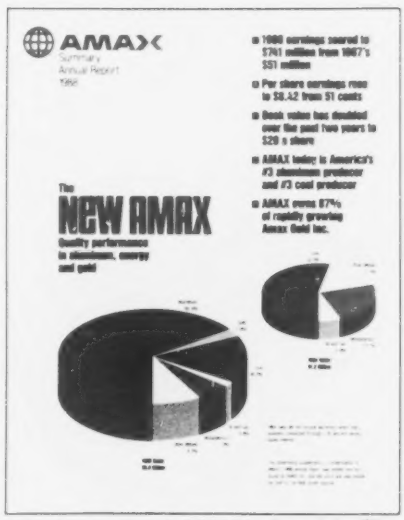
AMAX Inc. believes it's found a way to boost the communications impact of the now much-employed summary annual report. The company recently published a version of its report as a special section in *The Wall Street Journal* in an effort to extend its message beyond stockholders and employees, to the business/financial community at large.

On Thursday, April 13, AMAX published its summary annual report in the fourth section of the *WSJ*, reaching some five million readers. "We wanted to reach people whom we wouldn't reach through normal communication channels," explains Mitchell Badler, the company's director of corporate communications. "There are a lot of financial institutions, like banks and trusts, that only have a general idea, if any at all, of what AMAX is. We wanted to reach out to that audience and get them interested."

WSJ: It's a first

AMAX, the nation's third largest producer of aluminum and coal, spent $500,000 to publish its first-ever summary annual report, printed in a 16-page tabloid format. The company's shareholders, however, did not receive a copy of the new, condensed version.

The AMAX promotion is the first summary report to be published in the *WSJ*, and possibly the first in any publication, according to Fred Sibley, marketing director of special events for the *WSJ*. Publishing the financial information, he says, is a unique marketing tool to reach potential investors. "I think it suddenly takes the summary annual report out of the closet and gives it a viability it never had before," says Sibley. "Here at the *Journal* we look at it as another option for companies that want to enhance their image. You can't reach four to six million people and not expect something to happen."



The front page of AMAX's insert in The Wall Street Journal *was designed to attract the attention of the financial community.*

Kicks off campaign

AMAX's summary report insert is the first phase of a 12-month advertising/promotional campaign developed to dramatize its successful restructuring. "The campaign is intended to get the word out that we're a new AMAX," Badler emphasizes. The company reported a profit of $740 million in 1988, after suffering losses totaling $1.7 billion over a four-year period beginning in 1982.

The summary report—a more readable, condensed annual report format with bold headlines and dramatic charts—promotion was the company's way of kicking off its $1 million campaign with a big impact. "As companies restructure, many tend to lose their identities," comments Richard A. Lewis, chairman of Corporate Annual Reports Inc., the firm that designed the report. "To get the public's attention and establish a new identity, they have to do something really striking. Otherwise, they will remain invisible."

Continued on page 16

Europe 1992: a threat to mid-sized firms?

Tight budgets will make competition tough for this sector, asserts H&K executive

The unification of the European Community in 1992 will place a greater economic strain on European public relations firms—especially mid-sized ones, which do not have as many resources as large firms to invest on client services to compete in the new marketplace, contends Claudio Belli, president of Hill and Knowlton International.

To compete effectively and retain their clients in this new environment, all public relations firms will have to improve the quality and range of their services, Belli said, speaking at the spring meeting of the PRSA Counselors Academy. The traditional European emphasis on consumer publicity and crisis communications will no longer be enough, he says.

Instead, it will be replaced by a more sophisticated—and more costly—brand of

public relations. To succeed, firms will need to offer sophisticated counseling services and expertise in a variety of specialties, and will need to build and maintain strong connections throughout Europe, he stresses.

"Mid-sized firms won't have the muscle to compete because of limits on their expense structure," Belli asserted. "They will be unable to finance expansion to develop specialized strengths in growth areas."

Presently, he says, the largest public relations firms in Europe—Saatchi, Burson-Marsteller, Shandwick, and Hill and Knowlton—control less than one percent of the market. "Not one of them enjoys anything like market preeminence," Belli says. "The market is fragmented and widely dispersed." The United Kingdom, for example, has the largest public relations market in the EC, with billings of $400 million. But, there are 200 firms in London alone, and the biggest firm there has billings of approximately $25 million.

Specialization is key

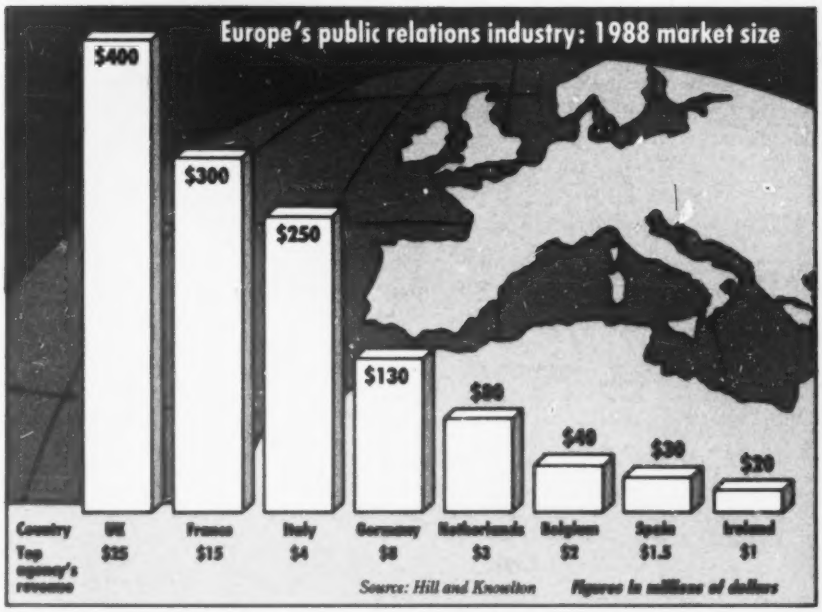
Belli predicts that medium-sized firms will be "in trouble" because they lack the financial resources and specialization needed to serve the new, complex needs of clients. "They will fall short on client service because most lack the pan-European or global connections that the new ball game requires," he contends. A survey of clients of England's public relations firms, conducted last year by Business Marketing Service LTD, found that the primary reason companies sought a new or additional public relations firm was "the need for specialist skills."

The plan, which calls for the 12 member countries to remove all trade barriers through the adoption of 300 directives establishing common business standards, means that European companies are faced with the challenge of positioning themselves for national, pan-European and global markets.

Growth will continue

"The unification will mean tremendous opportunity for growth and expansion in strategic public relations," Belli says. "Increasingly, public relations is seen as an essential element in the management of change."

Since 1986, European firms have been growing at a rate of 20 to 25 percent, and Belli expects the industry to experience further growth of between 25 and 35 percent over the next three years. He predicts that by 1991 the public relations industry in Europe will grow three-fold, to nearly $3 billion. (The United States spends about $9.5 billion a year on public relations, nearly 10 times greater than is spent in all of Europe.)



Today, more than $1 billion is spent on public relations by the European Community, which includes some 320 million customers. However, the market is fragmented; the largest public relations agencies in Europe control less than one percent of it. By 1991, the industry is expected to triple in size, to $3 billion.

One reason for this healthy expansion, he says, is that many European companies are reducing their in-house public relations departments in favor of outside firms. But despite this expected growth, it is still very difficult to predict what specific areas will grow or the structure of firms which will prosper in the future, Belli points out.

Emphasis on training

However, one significant effect of this growing emphasis on experienced, quality counsel will be a major push to improve personnel at public relations firms, which will mean increased spending on training and development, Belli notes. In addition, he says, many firms will be recruiting specialists from fields other than public relations to improve the quality of management ranks. "We will be jump-starting our business with an infusion of senior counselors from the outside," he adds.

Only firms with the financial resources to upgrade their services will survive, he maintains. "Providing better service to the customer means investing in quality, and adding to overhead," he says.

Strategic alliances

Another result of the increased demands that will be placed on public relations firms overseas is an expected increase in acquisitions, mergers and strategic alliances, Belli reports. Shandwick, for example, has acquired four European public relations firms in the last 12 months. Many firms will most likely seek to join forces with research and survey firms, marketing services, financial specialists, communications technology companies and government affairs specialists to get a leg up on the competition.

But most EC public relations executives, Belli says, are aware that simply getting bigger is not the solution to all their problems. Instead, he stresses, "size must also add strength," As a result, the foremost acquisition criterion has become, "What market niche, and what specialization will this combination add to my business portfolio."

Belli emphasizes that the massive financial and human resources of Europe's largest public relations firms should enable them to adjust more easily to the changing market. He also paints a bright future for smaller, "niche" firms that specialize in services that are in demand. "Very focused 'boutique' public relations firms will probably survive and may even prosper," he predicts. □

Illustration by Tom Lynn

Educators rank public relations programs

University of Maryland is most frequently cited as best undergrad school

The University of Maryland is most frequently cited as having the best undergraduate curriculum in public relations, according to a recent, informal survey of public relations educators conducted by the Department of Advertising/Public Relations at Marquette University, Milwaukee. This may be the first time the nation's top collegiate public relations programs have been ranked in this fashion, according to Bill L. Baxter, APR, associate professor and chairman of the department, who devised and conducted the survey.

Top college public relations programs

1. **University of Maryland**
2. **San Diego State**
3. **University of Florida**
4. **San Jose State**
5. **Boston University**
6. **Ball State**
7. **Syracuse University**
8. **California State (Fullerton)**
8. **Ohio State**
8. **University of Southern California**
8. **University of Wisconsin (Madison)**

Source: Department of Advertising/Public Relations, Marquette University.

The colleges listed above were most frequently cited in an informal survey of public relations educators as having the best undergraduate programs.

"I did the survey to find out in an informal, conversational manner what my colleagues think are the best programs," Baxter explains. "Often, students will ask, 'What are the good programs? Where do you stack up?' This is the closest we've ever come to a ranking of the sequence."

Surveys were sent to 114 educators who are members of the Public Relations

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Society of America and the International Association of Business Communicators; 70 (61 percent) responded. A total of 28 institutions were ranked according to the total number of times they were mentioned in response to the following question: Besides your program, which two public relations programs would you recommend to a student as the best in the country for undergraduate work in public relations?

Maryland topped the list with 22 responses, followed by San Diego State (15), University of Florida (10), San Jose State (10), Boston University (8), Ball State (7) and Syracuse University (5). Four colleges tied for eighth place, with four mentions each: California State (Fullerton), Ohio State, University of Southern California and the University of Wisconsin (Madison).

"Top colleges—not flukes"

Although the survey was not conducted scientifically, Baxter asserts that the rankings nevertheless depict a fairly accurate portrait of the top public relations curricula. "The top schools cited are not flukes," he contends. "There are good reasons why they've been recognized. They're doing things that are visible. You associate these schools with innovation."

Baxter says he's aware that some universities may question the validity of the sampling; however, he points out that respondents included seven former chairmen of the PRSA Educators Section, seven winners of the society's annual Outstanding Educator Award and authors of four of the field's leading textbooks.

"Passion for excellence"

When evaluating programs, Baxter maintains, public relations educators normally focus on three primary areas: writing, theoretical training and hands-on experience/internships. Most of the schools singled out excelled in each area to a certain degree, he says.

One respondent cited Maryland and San Jose State's "passion for excellence" as one attribute that warranted their top rankings. Respondents cited Maryland, along with other top programs, for their quality of instruction, balance of theoretical and practical training, large number of course offerings and impressive faculties.

Twenty (71 percent) of the outstanding public relations programs mentioned are part of journalism/mass communications units accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. □

Releasing balloons now a publicity bust

Environmental concerns, lawsuits deflate launches

Colorful helium balloons have long been a popular publicity tool. Disneyland alone releases more than one million balloons every year. And what would a political convention be without balloons? However, outdoor balloon releases are starting to attract the wrong kind of attention.

In 1985, environmentalists discovered that endangered species such as sperm whales and sea turtles were mistaking balloons that land on the water for jellyfish, and eating them. The balloons clog the animals' digestive tracts, and they slowly starve to death. Environmental groups have launched a public relations campaign to abolish outdoor releases.

"Our primary tactic is education," says Peter Hibbard, co-director of the Balloon Alert Project based in Toms River, N.J. "We lecture and we write articles. When we find out about a balloon release, we call the planner and explain our position."

One type of "unlaunch" now being used is tying balloons together to form an arch.

Photo courtesy of Ball/Ons TOday magazine.

The response to these calls is best summarized by Mitchell Fox, animal issues director of the Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS): "We raise some eyebrows and snickers, but after the initial weirdness wears off, they see that we have a point." In fact, most balloon launches are cancelled with just one call, he claims.

Bob Schoelkopf, director of New Jersey's Marine Mammal Stranding Center, believes that this is because the environmentalists don't try to order the balloon launchers to stop. Instead, he says, "We explain the problem, and offer to work with them to develop alternatives."

Teaching "unlaunching"

The alternatives are called "unlaunches." One suggested unlaunch is to give the balloons away to children attending an event. Susan Hibbard, co-director of the Balloon Alert Project, feels that publicists should prefer this kind of event. "This unlaunch gets you better coverage. Kids walk around the event with a balloon with your name on it, and then they take this 'billboard' into their homes, where it stays for days."

One of the organizations that switched to an unlaunch is Best Foods, makers of Skippy peanut butter and Mazola corn oil. In 1987, the company was planning a simultaneous balloon launch in New York City, Los Angeles and Indianapolis to announce its sponsorship of the 1988 Olympics. Best switched to arches constructed from balloons. At the end of the event, they lowered the arches and gave out pins for everyone to puncture the balloons. They even explained why they weren't launching the balloons.

"We saw no value to sticking to launches," explains Terilyn Finders, manager of communication for Best Foods. "By switching, we avoided controversy and prevented the balloons from becoming the issue the media covered instead of our sponsorship."

At a celebration for cancer survivors, the American Cancer Society had participants tie their balloons together into arches of hope. As the TV cameras rolled, the survivors and their families walked under these arches. Irving Rimer, APR, former vice president of public relations for the society, says the arches were

PRJ's FOURTH ANNUAL

SALARY SURVEY

Photo by Ken Cooper/The Image Bank

Median salary is $39,400; gender gap lives

Median salaries have increased only marginally for the public relations field, and the gender gap is still very much a fact, according to *PRJ*'s recently-completed Fourth Annual Salary Survey.

The self-selecting survey was conducted via a questionnaire inserted in the March 1989 issue of *PRJ*. Because this is not a random survey, a margin of error cannot be calculated.

Compared to the salaries reported by 1,235 respondents to last year's survey, this year's 1,284 respondents show only a 1 percent increase in median salary. Last year's median was $39,100; this year's is $39,413. When respondents were asked how much of a salary increase they have had since a year ago, however (a more valid indicator, since two different groups of respondents are not being compared), the results were somewhat more encouraging: The sample had a 6 percent median salary increase, or 2 percent greater than the Bureau of Labor Statistics' reported cost-of-living increase of just over 4 percent nationwide. One respondent in 20 reported either no raise or a decrease from the previous year.

More than half (54 percent) of this year's respondents were women—a slight increase over last year's percentage (51 percent). The

> **"More than half of survey respondents feel they are not being paid enough"**

SALARIES: MEN AND WOMEN, BY AGE

	median salary	% over 45k	received bonus	size of bonus	% men/ women
under 35 years old					
MEN	$32,624	27%	41%	$3,220	26%
WOMEN	26,629	7	31	1,665	60
35 years and older					
MEN	57,886	75	40	11,496	74
WOMEN	42,220	42	30	9,466	40
ALL RESPONDENTS	39,413	40	35	6,348	—

Sixty percent of female respondents are age 35 and under, but the median salary for males in that category is 22 percent greater. Over 35, the ratios reverse and males' median is 37 percent greater.

median salary for males with less than five years of experience ($29,275) is nearly $5,500 (or 23 percent) greater than that of their female counterparts ($23,778). In most cases, the gap widens as years of experience increase. Males with five to nine years of experience have a median of $40,604, which is $7,900, or 24 percent, greater than the median for females with the same experience ($32,686). Males with 10 to 14 years of experience earn about $10,000 (24 percent) more than females with the same experience ($51,457 is the median for men; $41,308 for women). At 15 to 19 years of experience, the gap narrows somewhat: The median for men is $59,106 compared to $49,535 for women—a difference of $9,571, or 19 percent. Of those with 20 or more years of experience, men out-earn women $68,439 to $53,880—a difference of $14,559, or 27 percent. (See table, page 18.)

When men and women are compared by age, salary disparities are also apparent. Men under 35 years old have a median salary of $32,624, which is nearly $6,000, or 22 percent, greater than that of women in the same age range.

SALARIES: MEN AND WOMEN, BY EXPERIENCE

	median salary	% over 45k	received bonus	size of bonus	% men/ women
1 to 4 years experience					
MEN	$29,275	14%	39%	$1,095	12%
WOMEN	23,778	4	35	490	35
5 to 9 years experience					
MEN	40,604	38	39	2,191	21
WOMEN	32,686	14	25	907	30
10 to 14 years experience					
MEN	51,457	66	44	3,181	21
WOMEN	41,308	36	24	2,276	18
15 to 19 years experience					
MEN	59,106	87	44	9,977	14
WOMEN	49,535	66	42	4,500	10
20-plus years experience					
MEN	68,439	90	42	7,835	30
WOMEN	53,880	72	43	4,987	6
ALL MEN	51,716	43	42	3,250	46
ALL WOMEN	31,993	21	31	1,415	54
ALL RESPONDENTS	39,413	40	35	2,100	—

Each additional five years of experience correlates with about $10,000 more in salary. At entry level, males' median salary is 23 percent greater than females'; at the 20 years-plus experience level, the gap is 27 percent.

> **"Whether compared by years of experience or age, male/female salary gaps exist at every level"**

At age 35 and above, the median for men is $57,886—in this case, $15,666, or 37 percent, greater than the median for women in that age range. (See table, page 18.)

Sixty-five percent of the men who responded to the survey have been in the business for 10 years or more. In contrast, 65 percent of the women have been in the field for fewer than 10 years. It's no surprise then, that almost three-quarters (74 percent) of the males who responded to the study are 35 years of age and older, while 60 percent of the female respondents are under age 35.

Only half satisfied

This year, respondents were asked to comment on whether they're adequately paid for the job they do. More than half (52 percent) said that they felt that they are not being paid enough. Broken down by sex, a total of 58 percent of the women and 44 percent of the men reported dissatisfaction with their salaries.

Asked to indicate one or more reasons why they believe they are underpaid, 41 percent put some blame on their employers. But among the 20 percent of those who indicated that they feel they are not adequately compensated because "public relations does not pay well as a whole," only about one-quarter (27 percent) also indicated that employers are responsible.

Closer examination of respondents who said that they feel they are in a low-paying profession revealed specialty-area demographics roughly parallel to those of the overall survey sample. (See box describing make-up of sample, page 19.) However, this group did tend to be slightly less experienced and had a median salary ($34,663) somewhat lower than that of the overall sample. Less than 25 percent of this subgroup earn more than $45,000. These practitioners are also more likely to be working in a public relations firm than in corporate or other sectors: About 25 percent are in counseling firms, compared with 15 percent for the overall sample.

Experience counts

Each five years of experience correlates to another $10,000 in salary, much as in *PRJ*'s previous survey results. Just under half (49 percent) of respondents with between one and four years of experience earn more than $25,000 a year, while the same percentage of respondents with between five and nine years of experience earn more than $35,000 annually. Just over half (51 percent) of the respondents with between 10 and 14 years of experience earn over $45,000; 46 percent of respondents with between 15 and 19 years under their belts earn more than $55,000. Finally, just over half (52 percent) of the respondents with more than 20 years of experience earn over $65,000 annually.

Best/worst-paying fields

Respondents were permitted to assign only one primary

The survey technique

PRJ's Fourth Annual Salary Survey was conducted using a postage-paid, mail-back questionnaire inserted in the March 1989 issue.

As is common in such self-selecting mail surveys, there is no way of knowing how representative the sample is of the total universe of *PRJ* readers. Therefore, small percentage changes from last year may be due to sample differences rather than to clear establishment of a new trend.

Describing the sample

More than half (54 percent) of the respondents to this year's questionnaire were women, a slightly higher percentage than last year (51 percent). The age breakdowns of this year's respondents also closely mirrored last year's: 9 percent under 25 years old (up about 1 percent from last year); 36 percent between 25 and 34; 29 percent between 35 and 44; 18 percent between 45 and 54 (up 2 percent from last year); and 8 percent over 55 (compared to 11 percent last year). The overall median respondent age is about the same: between 37 and 38 years old.

All the experience levels fall within 1 percent, one way or the other, of last year's results. Four percent of the respondents have been in the profession less than a year; 24 percent have between one and four years of experience; 26 percent have five to nine years in the field; 19 percent have 10 to 14 years; 11 percent have 15 to 19 years; and 16 percent have been around public relations for more than 20 years.

Geographically, the Midwest is the most strongly represented, with 28 percent of respondents reporting in from that region. The Northeast (which includes Canadian respondents) represents 26 percent of the sample; the Southeast, 24 percent, and the West-Southwest (including Texas and the Northwest), 23 percent.

Varied activities

Work in a counseling firm was once again cited as the most common primary activity of a respondent's organization, although it was not mentioned quite as frequently (15 percent this year; 17 percent last year). The figures for each activity are as follows, with last year's figure, where different, appearing in parentheses: industrial/manufacturing, 11 percent; health care, 9 percent; financial/insurance, 7 percent (9 percent); association/foundation, 10 percent (8 percent); government, 7 percent; utility, 5 percent (6 percent); education, 7 percent (6 percent); media, 3 percent; religious/charitable, 3 percent; and other activities, 23 percent (22 percent).

Respondents were allowed to indicate multiple public relations specialties. Media relations was once again the most popular area, with 81 percent (80 percent last year) noting that they at least sometimes work with the press. This year's figures for other specialties (and last year's where different) are as follows: publicity, 72 percent; special events, 72 percent (71 percent); community relations, 58 percent (59 percent); corporate communications, 55 percent (58 percent); marketing, 52 percent (54 percent); public affairs, 45 percent (47 percent); employee relations, 42 percent; advertising, 40 percent (41 percent); issues management, 36 percent (37 percent) and investor relations, once again by far the area least often specified, at 13 percent (14 percent).

"IR and issues management continue to be the

SALARY BY TITLE

	median salary	% over 45k
All respondents (all titles combined)		
Northeast	$43,547	47%
West-Southwest	41,185	43
Midwest	37,486	37
Southeast	36,015	32
ALL RESPONDENTS	39,413	40
Account executives, representatives, associates, assistants		
Northeast	27,225	7
West-Southwest	28,742	9
Midwest	23,840	4
Southeast	22,160	3
Account supervisors, group managers, other managers, other supervisors, vice presidents		
Northeast	52,720	69
West-Southwest	51,139	66
Midwest	48,053	58
Southeast	43,527	46
Other officers (senior counselors, partners, senior vice presidents, executive vice presidents)*		
Northeast	59,008	77
West-Southwest	67,404	62
Midwest	60,935	72
Southeast	50,000	50

*These figures exclude those who wrote in "Other" titles.

Regionally, median salaries for the total sample are slightly higher in the Northeast. But within two title groupings, median salaries in the West-Southwest are higher.

activity to their employer organization. Several primarily corporate activities (industrial/manufacturing, utility, and scientific/technical) prove to be, as in the past, better-paying than "public relations counseling firm." (See table, page 21.)

America's "smokestack" activities still pay the best: almost three out of four (74 percent) respondents from industrial and manufacturing organizations earn more than $45,000 annually. Utilities are also lucrative: 64 percent who work for them earn $45,000 or more. (Men out-earn women in both sectors: Medians for men as compared to women are $69,219 to $39,507 in industry and $55,470 to $42,480 in utilities.) Scientific/technical and solo practitioners each have slightly over half of the respondents reporting salaries above $45,000. No other type of organizational activity had more than half of its representatives earning $45,000+.

Just below utilities are those in scientific/technical (median: $45,833), solo practitioners ($45,825), media/communications ($43,027), counseling firms ($41,691), and financial/insurance ($40,853).

On the low end are: association/foundation ($37,322), education ($36,512), government ($35,988), health care ($33,711), transportation/hotels, ($33,140), religious/charitable ($32,509) and those who work for ad agencies ($30,328).

Even in the lower-paying organizational areas, men prevail salary-wise. Males in government, for example, earn median salaries of $44,063; females, $32,342.

Specialties: What pays?

While respondents were limited to giving one primary activity for their employer organizations, they were invited to list as many personal public relations specialties as they liked. The average number listed was six.

Investor relations and issues management continue to be the highest-paying public relations specialties, with practitioners in these two areas commanding median salaries of $51,983 and $48,706, respectively. (See table, page 21.) Sixty-three percent of the IR specialists earn more than $45,000 annually (median for men is $65,986; for women, $34,735). Fifty-seven percent of issues management specialists earn more than $45,000 (median for men is $57,551; for women, $39,836).

Public affairs practitioners (median salary of $44,293; 48 percent over $45,000) and corporate communications specialists (median $44,140; 49 percent over $45,000) are also at the high end. Generalists ($42,778; 46 percent over $45,000) and employee relations specialists ($41,183; 43 percent over $45,000) also earn more than the median salary for the total sample.

Lower-paying specialties continue to be media relations ($39,056), special events ($38,299), and publicity ($37,623).

Sizing it up

The relative size of the employer's public relations staff is also relevant to salary. Two-thirds of the respondents in firms or departments with 25 or more public relations practitioners earn more than $45,000 (last year's figure was 64 percent), compared with 57 percent in firms or departments with 10 to 24 professionals (same figure as last year). Of those in firms with five to nine professionals, 57 percent earn $45,000 or better (higher than last year's 47 percent). In the smaller firms or departments, though, where 61 percent of the sample works, lower pay is the norm: just one-third (as compared to 30 percent last year) in environments with between one and four professionals report annual salaries of more than $45,000.

In public relations counseling firms, the bigger the billings,

highest-paying specialties

the bigger the salary. The median salary of a practitioner working at an agency with billings under $100,000 annually is $31,236. At agencies where the billings are between $100,000 and $500,000, the median is $40,037. Agencies billing between $500,000 and $1 million offer median salaries of $44,179, while those billing over $1 million each year pay median salaries of $47,105.

A title on the door

Within departments or firms, regardless of size, titular status offers a mixed bag. (See table, page 20.) The median salary level for vice presidents is up slightly over that reported by last year's respondents, with the VPs in counseling firms still lagging about 25 percent behind their counterparts in other organizations ($52,936 vs. $70,561).

Corporations and other institutions traditionally have been more reluctant than firms to bestow vice presidential titles, and salaries may reflect this rarity, to some degree. Male VPs in counseling firms earn median salaries of $53,203; female VPs earn $48,333. In other organizations males earn $72,282, and females, $66,000.

Assistants ($28,132 median annual salary) and associates/representatives ($32,578 median annual salary) in corporations and other organizations earn more than account executives and junior AEs ($22,126 median annual salary) in counseling firms. Supervisor/managers out-earn senior AEs $43,869 to $38,614.

Where it's at

Geographically, the Northeast (including Canada) continues to be the best-paying place to work. Forty-seven percent of practitioners there earn more than $45,000 (68 percent of the males; 28 percent of the females), compared with 43 percent above that figure in the Southwest-West (including Texas and the Northwestern states).

Meanwhile, only 37 percent of respondents in the Midwest and 32 percent of respondents in the Southeast are earning more than $45,000 a year. It also pays to work in an urban environment: 43 percent of the urban public relations work force earn over $45,000, compared to 34 percent of those working in suburban and rural environments. (Seven out of 10 respondents report they work in cities).

Bonus babies

A smaller proportion (35 percent) of respondents than in 1988's survey group (40 percent) reported receiving a bonus during the previous year. Just over four out of 10 males (42 percent), as compared to slightly more than three out of 10 females (31 percent), said they received a bonus. The median bonus for males was $3,250; for females, $1,415. Younger respondents (under 35 years old) were, however, just as likely to receive a bonus as those 35 and above.

Affiliation and accreditation

Forty-two percent of PRSA members earn over $45,000, compared to 27 percent of nonmembers. In addition, 70 percent of accredited *PRJ* readers earn over $45,000, compared with 44 percent of other respondents who have the required accreditation minimum of five years of experience. The median for accredited readers is $53,454; for the rest of those practitioners who would be eligible, it's $42,738. □

Nicholas J. Tortorello is chairman of Research & Forecasts, which coded, tabulated and analyzed the data for PRJ. *Keith Barnes is project director and senior writer for R&F.*

PRIMARY ACTIVITY OF RESPONDENT'S ORGANIZATION

	median salary	% over 45k
Industrial/manufacturing	$58,407	74%
Utility	51,081	64
Scientific/technical	45,833	52
Solo practitioner	45,825	53
Media/communications	43,027	47
Public relations counseling firm	41,691	45
Financial/insurance	40,853	41
Association/foundation	37,322	34
Education	36,512	28
Government	35,988	34
Healthcare	33,711	26
Transportation/hotels/resorts/ entertainment	33,140	27
Religious/charitable organization	32,509	16
Advertising agency	30,328	22
All other	34,393	28
ALL RESPONDENTS	39,413	40

Only those in the industrial and utilities sectors show median salaries of $50,000+. Medians for those in ad agencies, charitable, travel and health care are under $35,000.

AREA OF PUBLIC RELATIONS*

	median salary	% over 45k
Investor relations	$51,983	63%
Issues management	48,706	57
Public affairs	44,293	48
Corporate communications	44,140	49
Generalist	42,778	46
Employee relations	41,183	43
Marketing	39,000	39
Community relations	39,181	40
Media relations	39,056	39
Special events	38,299	37
Publicity	37,623	37
Advertising	37,414	37
All Other	40,430	43
ALL RESPONDENTS	39,413	40

*Multiple responses permitted

By speciality, IR and issues management lead the pack. Excluding these two, there is only a $7,000 difference between the lowest median by specialty and the highest.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL

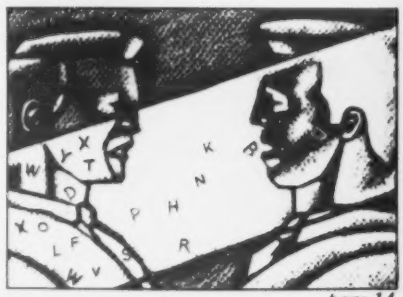
July 1989 Vol. 45 No. 7

FEATURE

14 Beyond Employee Publications: Making the Personal Connection

Valuable as in house publications are, they can't do the whole job of employee communications. In fact, personalized communication from management is increasingly the preferred choice among the new breed of employees. Yet, evidence shows that many organizations are still relying primarily on publications. A look at why some have not yet made the personal connection, and at others that are doing so—with productivity and quality benefits to show for it.

E. Zoe McCathrin, APR



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PORTFOLIO

21 Employee Annual Reports

In recent years, restructurings, mergers and acquisitions, an intensely competitive business environment and an increasingly sophisticated and information-hungry employee base have led companies to develop more meaningful types of employee publications—notably, the employee annual report. How several companies are tailoring content and graphics to make this relatively new format achieve their specific goals. *Laurie Sue Brockway*

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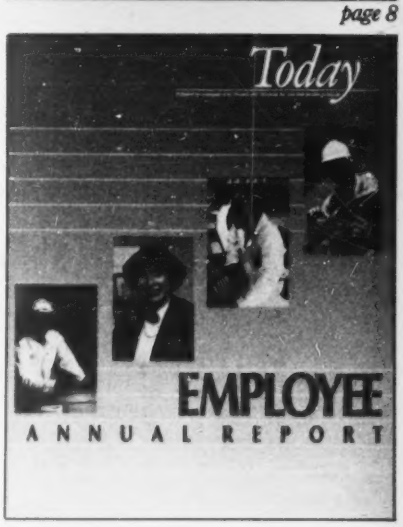

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Cover Illustration: *Terrance Cummings*

INSIDE TRACK

Facing up to employees

No doubt about it, employees have many reasons to be jittery these days—not the least of which are corporate restructurings that frequently lead to downsizing of staffs. Yet, given the costs of training and the service orientation of our economy, employees are a more valuable asset than ever.

What more important topic for corporate practitioners and their firm counselors then, than how best to communicate meaningfully with employees? Author Zoe McCathrin, APR, assistant professor at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Kent State, formerly vice president of public relations at BancOhio National Bank, surveyed the available data and some of the gurus of internal communictions *(page 14)*. Her reluctant conclusion: Top managers know that face-to-face dialogue is critical, but many companies are still relying primarily on printed communications. "There's a lot of good thinking out there, but it's not being implemented," notes McCathrin, who asked the experts why this is so, and also found several organizations that *are* actively making the personal connection.

Just so you don't think we're anti-publication (which would be rather self-defeating . . .), this issue also features a special portfolio on employee annual reports *(page 21)*. Though the genre is relatively new, there are as many variations on the theme as there are individual needs within organizations.

Also in this issue, a timely guide to law and ethics in regard to writing—timely because of the June Supreme Court decision on copyright, which affects practitioners both as writers and as employers of writers.

Time—and money—are the subjects of "Computerizing for productivity" *(page 26)*, Jim Horton's frank, instructive look at why most public relations firms aren't yielding the benefits they'd anticipated from their computer systems. Jim, who's with the Chester Burger Company, recounts horror stories—but also offers hope for happy endings.

—Karlene Lukovitz, Editor

PRSA Public Relations Society of America
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The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) is an individual membership professional society of 14,265 public relations practitioners. Its major services to members include programs of Professional Development and Accreditation, an Information Center, publications, tracking of issues of national concern, and promotion of ethical practice through adherence to PRSA's "Code of Professional Standards." PRSA's mission is "To serve the public need for understanding and cooperation among its diverse interests by fostering high professional and ethical standards for all those practicing public relations."

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BRIEFINGS

Environmental issues dominate print coverage

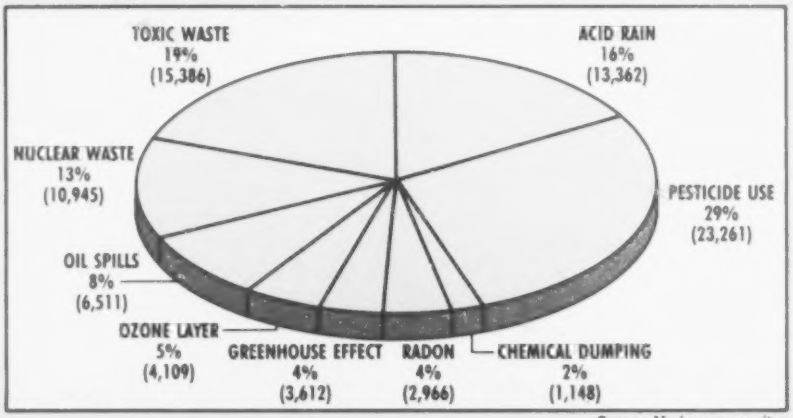
Over the past five years, stories addressing environmental issues such as the dangers of pesticides, toxic waste, acid rain, oil spills and the greenhouse effect have received more print coverage than social problems such as AIDS and cocaine abuse, according to a scan of top daily newspapers, wire services, and business and trade publications conducted by Mead Data Central via its NEXIS News Monitor.

During the five-year period, the print media generated 80,980 news stories addressing environmental issues. In comparison, less than 40,000 stories were written about the AIDS crisis and about 16,000 stories reported on the growing use of crack.

The top environmental issue found in the news scan was the dangerous effects of pesticides on personal health, which appeared 23,261 times out of the 80,980 environmental stories. The other top subjects covered, in order of frequency were: toxic waste, acid rain, nuclear waste, oil spills, the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, radon and chemical dumping.

The NEXIS service includes more than 350 major news sources. □

Top environmental stories



Source: Nexis news monitor

A recent study found environmental problems to be the subject of 80,980 news, magazine and wire stories over the last five years. The figures in parentheses indicate the number of times each topic appeared.

Resources

Continued from page 11

proper steps to take when siting a project in a neutral or hostile environment. Topics covered include assessing issues, identifying concerns and developing a community relations plan.

Price: Single copies free. Contact: Communications for Management, Inc. International, 8 South Michigan Avenue, Suite 1001, Chicago, IL 60603; (312) 641-0570.

Business magazine database

"Business Currents," a new IBM PC-compatible database that allows users to locate and collect summaries of articles contained in 13 leading U.S. business magazines, is now available from Insight Datasystems. For most articles, full texts can be ordered. The publications indexed include *Business Week, Fortune, Forbes, Harvard Business Review, D&B Reports, Nation's Business, U.S. News & World Report, Inc., Business Month, Industry Week, Venture, Across the Board,* and *Management Review.*

Business Currents operates on IBM PC-compatible computers with at least 4.2 MB of available hard disk space and 390K of available DOS (3.01 or higher) memory.

Price: $229 for initial database of previous 12 months' articles, software and documentation, plus $22 for each monthly update. Contact: Insight Datasystems, Inc., 723 Washington Street, Newton, MA 02160; (617) 965-6888.

Electronic media kits

Media kits designed and created for trade and consumer magazines in diskette form are now available from CompuDoc. These interactive documents include user-friendly integration of color graphics, animation and special spreadsheet analysis. The kit allows viewers to provide input on their requirements and preference for circulation, editorial emphasis, ad size, budget, trade show activity, and so on, and then prints out a recommended advertising schedule.

Price: $9,000–$14,000. A brochure diskette is available free. Contact: CompuDoc, 1090 King George Post Road, Suite 808, Edison, NJ 08837; (201) 417-1799.

New fax service

A new service, Xpedite FaxCast, which can deliver up to thousands of faxes with a single transmission from a personal computer, is now available from Xpedite Systems. The user employs a PC to transmit a fax address list and the document to be delivered. Address lists can be stored for future use.

Features include the ability to send text, graphic and desktop publishing files to fax machines, and the option of selecting either express or off-peak delivery. Subscribers require an IBM PC or compatible with 512K of memory, a hard disk or dual floppy drives and a standard asynchronous modem.

Price: $69 for software. Contact: Xpedite Systems, Inc., 446 Highway 35, Eatontown, NJ 07724; (800) 227-9379.

Japanese IR database

A database of Japanese investment professionals, "IR Japan Mail," which provides firms with direct access to Japan's financial community via mailing labels printed in Japanese characters, is available from CDA Investment Technologies. The database contains information on about 3,500 Japanese analysts, fund managers and other financial decision makers. It also provides coverage of Japan's banks, investment and securities companies, research firms and insurance companies.

Price: $4,200 annual fee entitles subscribers to six label mailings. Contact: CDA Investment Technologies, Inc., 1355 Piccard Drive, Rockville, MD 20850; (301) 975-9600. □

Beyond Employee Publications

Making the Personal Connection

Many companies are still relying too heavily on impersonal forms of employee communications—but those who have actively revamped their strategies are reaping the benefits

By E. Zoe McCathrin, APR

Employee publications have been an essential communications tool since at least the late 1800s, when Dayton, Ohio-based NCR introduced *The NCR Factory News*.

Today, more employee newsletters, magazines and reports exist than ever before—guesstimates put the number at about 25,000 in the United States and Canada, according to IABC Communications Director Clifford D. McGoon. He and others cite many good reasons for this boom: consistency of message, ability to reach all employees simultaneously, ability to clearly and thoroughly convey complex messages, relative ease of distribution and cost efficiency.

However, a growing body of evidence suggests that internal publications may have become somewhat *too* relied upon. The data indicates that many organizations are still underutilizing other, more personal communications methods—methods which, paradoxically, both employees and top management agree are essential, and more effective than publications alone.

Why the seeming gap between this shared perception of the importance of personal communications methods and their actual implementation? How have some organizations made the personal connection?

Defining the need

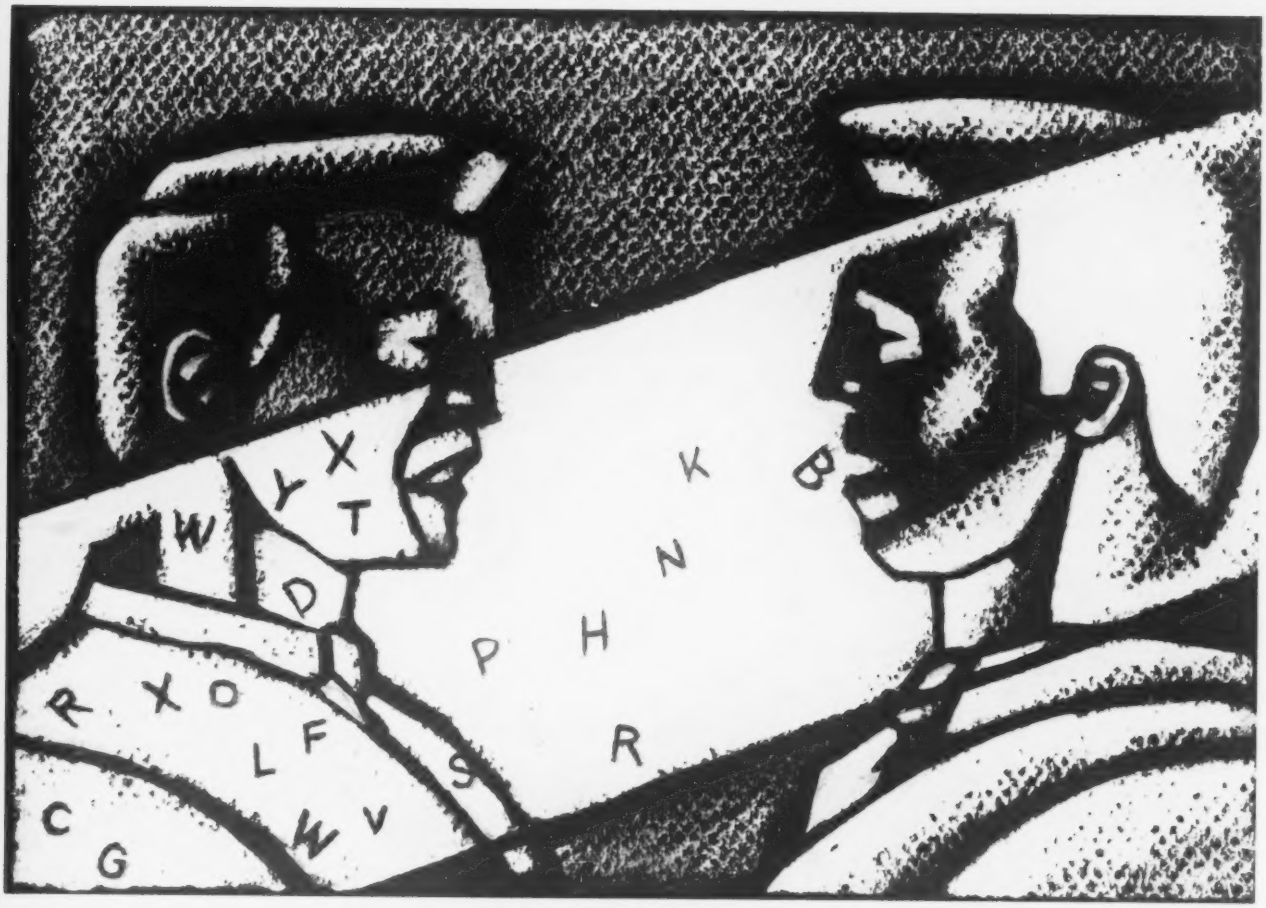
A host of changes in the makeup of the work force itself are major contributors to the need for more personal forms of communication. U.S. Labor Department statistics tell us that nearly half of the work force is under 35 years of age. Countless studies in the past decade have confirmed that those who were born after the family television set became a household fixture are more attuned to receiving information electronically or in face-to-face discussions. The printed word, for these generations, has become a secondary tool.

Few if any employers are unaware of the growing problem of illiteracy in this country. For sectors that are particularly hard-hit by this problem, internal publications are obviously of limited value.

Yet, today's American employees are for the most part well-educated and seek involvement in the workplace. They need and want more information from their companies and organizations. They have far less "automatic" loyalty to a company and, according to the National Opinion Research Center, have a work ethic more driven by desire for personal success than by a strong desire to help their companies succeed.

Their hierarchy of needs in relation to their employing organization starts, according to Roger D'Aprix, practice leader at Towers, Perrin, Forster & Crosby, with the questions: "What am *I* expected to do on this job?" and "Am *I* performing appropriately?" quickly followed by, "Does anyone care about *me* in this organization?" These, he writes in "Experts in Action," edited by Bill Cantor, are followed by the "we" questions: "What are *we* up to, and how are *we* doing?" "What is *our* charter and how does that charter match up to other functions?" Only if all of these primary questions have been answered satisfactorily will the employee ask: "How can *I* help?"

But changes in the demographic and attitudinal makeup of the work force itself are only half of the picture. The dramatic forces that have been affecting businesses and organizations in recent years—intense, global competition, restructuring and mergers and acquisitions, deregulation, the switch to a service economy—continue to have a huge impact on employees and employee relations.



On one hand, as D'Aprix points out, employees' status has risen tremendously, as employers have recognized the costs involved in retraining for service positions and have begun to see labor shortages resulting from the "baby bust." On the other hand, employees in some ways have more reason than ever to feel insecure and to demand answers about the futures of their specific companies, the fields in which those companies operate and what this will mean for their personal employment and growth.

Trying to reach thousands of employees scattered throughout many locations and helping employees to cope with dramatic corporate changes such as mergers and downsizing are key among the issues with which communicators are grappling. More than two-thirds of executives from 281 major U.S. firms who were surveyed by The Conference Board earlier this year indicated that their firms had undergone a major corporate restructuring since 1984, nearly half had substantially reduced staff, and 45 percent had been involved in mergers or acquisitions.

According to Richard Wilmot, APR, of San Diego-based Wilmot Associates, Inc., both the under 35 years of age half of the work force and those of the "'60s generation" are concerned about a lack of information about their employing organizations, including where the company is headed and the whys behind decisions. For these employees, an effective management is one that is willing to listen, and not just "talk down."

"Communications pros do print and video very well, but we're not trained in group dynamics"

Yet, while employers and employees have a greater need than ever to relate effectively to one another, employees clearly feel that, to a significant extent, this is not happening. Of 5,000 workers nationwide surveyed in 1987 by Boston-based The Wyatt Company, only 40 percent said that management seeks their input on important issues; about 25 percent said they have no freedom to express opinions.

Office workers from around the country who were polled by Louis Harris and Associates in 1988 indicated that one of the largest shortcomings they see in management is a failure to encourage a free exchange of information among employees and departments—and 38 percent of executives interviewed also conceded this point. Just over three-quarters of employees indicated that information exchange is very important to them, but only 35 percent said it is occurring in their companies. Similarly, 61 percent said that a participatory management style at all levels of decision-making is very important to them, but only 28 percent said it exists in their organizations.

A recent IABC/Towers Perrin survey of 32,000 employees in 26 business organizations revealed that only half thought that company communication was candid and accurate. Two-thirds said communication was incomplete, and more than half said communication was strictly from the top down, with no opportunity provided for discussion.

D'Aprix points out that nearly all past research has indicated that employees consider "the grapevine" to be their primary source of organizational information,

but that respondents to this recent study most often cited their immediate supervisors as primary sources. While this may indicate some progress, he notes, the grapevine was still the second most-cited information source—and it far outstripped all company media.

How do employees *prefer* to get their information? According to this and other studies, they prefer personal communications from their immediate supervisors, senior executives and small group meetings, in that order. What forms of communications do employees feel need most improvement? Those from senior executives, immediate supervisors, orientation programs, small group meetings and upward communication programs—again, all personal forms of communication.

A 1988 survey of 150 college workers by Kent State University graduate public relations students Richard Waren, Nita Rao and Regina Walz Simpson also found a preference for one-on-one communication in all key communication areas, including the conveying of expectations for performance, rules and regulations, strategies and goals, safety and productivity advice and benefits information. And, 89 percent of these workers, like their peers elsewhere, feel that internal publications are good for additional information and to keep on file for reference, but are too slow in production and too company-focused to serve all their communications needs. Education level, which varied from high-school dropout to college graduate in this sample, made no difference in communications method preferences.

Public relations professionals know only too well that when gaps in meaningful communication from management exist, the vacuum is filled with sometimes inaccurate or incomplete grapevine news and rumors, which can cause needless stress and concern among employees and work against productivity.

Growing management awareness

There's also plenty of data to indicate that management has become increasingly aware of employee preferences, when it comes to communication modes. The polls conducted by Harris indicate that 66 percent of executives are aware that most workers want freer exchange of information—a 16 percent increase over 1966. Forty-four percent recognize that many workers want participatory management—up 19 percent from '86.

Brad Whitworth, manager of employee communications at Hewlett-Packard, Palo Alto, California, and current IABC chairman, says that H-P's own research, based on work originated at General Electric in 1984–'85, also substantiates the call for face-to-face and interactive communications. "Mass media and publications can supplement, but not substitute, for dialogue and the chance for employees to give feedback," he says.

Of 132 CEOs surveyed in 1987 by IABC and Johnson and Higgins, a benefit consulting firm, 92 percent cited personal and small group meetings as the best method of employee communications. Most CEOs also said that employee communications directly influence job satisfaction, improve employee commitment and increase productivity. A full 71 percent said communications directly affect the bottom line.

But are these companies taking action on this information? In many cases, the answer is, not really. One indicator of this is the recent Conference Board survey of corporate communications executives, which concluded that "communicators rely on management letters and bulletins and the employee periodical to achieve most of their communications goals." Over 90 percent of these respondents report having at least one periodical that goes to all employees, and one-third have publications for one or more special employee groups.

Hewlett-Packard now communicates with all first-line supervisors via an in-house newswire and E-Mail

On the other hand, three-quarters of these organizations said they have a program of small meetings between managers and employees—and 70 percent said the number of these meetings have increased in the past few years. About half said they schedule meetings on at least a quarterly basis.

Still, about one-third reported that they meet only for "special reasons." And, when respondents were asked to indicate which media they use for various communications purposes, newsletters, magazines and management letters/bulletins were much more frequently cited than meetings in regard to many objectives. (*See table, page 18.*) For example, 90 percent use newsletters or magazines to improve employee morale and foster goodwill, while 75 percent use meetings for this purpose. The only other objectives for which more than 50 percent of respondents indicated that they use meetings were informing employees about internal changes, promoting productivity and quality orientation, and explaining compensation and benefits.

In comparison, a large majority cited using newsletters and magazines for a total of 13 purposes, including the ones already mentioned, plus: increasing understanding of the company's products, organization, codes and policies regarding corporate ethics; changing corporate culture and the external business environment; encouraging employees to be more entrepreneurial; increasing employee understanding of major health or social issues, and encouraging participation in community activities. Management letters/bulletins are also heavily relied upon for many of these objectives.

William Corbett, APR, vice president of communications of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, cites a Robert Half study that indicates that CEOs spend 20 percent of their time writing memos. "Why not use the telephone?" he asks.

Mike Emanuel, president of Myron Emanuel/Communications, Inc. in New York and a specialist in internal communications, says there is no question that a gap exists today between what employees want to hear and who they want to hear from and the methods most companies use to communicate with this very critical audience. He says that, while he has substantiated the need for interaction between managers and employees over and over through communications audits, employee surveys and focus groups, "it just isn't happening."

"Five to 10 years ago, we were saying that company publications were dead," echoes David A. Orman, manager of employee communications for ARCO, based in Los Angeles. "But it hasn't happened. We were also predicting that video would become the widely used and accepted internal communications medium, but the expense of production and demand for high quality continue to be factors that constrain video use for many companies." (Although nearly all of the respondents to The Conference Board's survey said they use audiovisual materials, these methods were generally viewed as complementary to print vehicles.)

"Frankly, concentrating on print as an effective communications tool has been exaggerated for decades," says Barry A. Stein. Stein is president of Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Goodmeasure, Inc., a management consulting firm specializing in corporate culture. "Most managers assume that they are perfectly good at face-to-face, but often they are not." Improving in this area is a "major opportunity to contribute to their organiza-

tions," he maintains. Stein's colleague, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, professor of business administration at Harvard, recently published a book, "When Giants Learn to Dance," which documents the "extraordinarily fundamental" importance of effective internal and external communications to succeeding in the new global marketplace. Kanter contends that most organizations today are not structured to "facilitate interaction and the bringing together of people with different points of view."

What's getting in the way?

If organizations know the importance of personal communication with employees, why aren't some approaching this in a more active way?

One reason, according to Emanuel, is that no one specific person within a firm is put in charge of organizing interactive communications. "And, communications professionals are trained in mass media," he says. "While we've learned to do print and even video communications very well, we are not trained in group dynamics. We aren't sure how to stimulate first-line managers to talk with subordinates to motivate and inform them."

A job fair provided employees and spouses a chance to consider options and talk to managers when Allstate stopped writing policies in Massachusetts.

Another reason frequently cited by internal communications experts is a lack of confidence on the part of both top management and supervisors about their ability to successfully conduct effective meetings and discussions. Fear of too much candor, too many questions and the potential for disagreement with management decisions are also factors that make some companies hesitate to encourage discourse with employees.

The tools to communicate

Internal communications pros agree that there are two basic keys to strengthening managers' confidence and ensuring effective dialogue in employee meetings: giving managers as much timely information as possible and providing meeting training.

Supplying line management with support tools, including written outlines of key "talking points" and illustrative data, helps ensure that the information shared with employees is accurate and appropriate. Information about company progress and explanations on why decisions are made also must be consistently provided to managers.

At Hewlett-Packard, there is a major effort to open channels of communication more than ever before, according to Whitworth. "We're trying to help managers communicate and give them support information" so that "more information will be available where employees say they want to get it," he says. Top management is now communicating with all first-line supervisors via an in-house newswire and E-Mail, he reports.

Stein is working with Dallas-based GTE and public relations executives Harriet C. Gonzalez, APR and Bonni G. Jones as part of the company's ongoing efforts to support the development of a new corporate culture. One new program focuses on improving supervisor information via a new, monthly newsletter that provides managers with supervisory and communications tips, as well as critical information to pass on to their staffs. "A formal communications audit will be conducted in first quarter 1990," says Gonzalez, "but our informal feedback from employees has been very, very positive."

"We were saying that company publications were dead five or 10 years ago, but it hasn't happened"

The United States Army is an outstanding example of an organization that has made all the right moves for years now, when it comes to informing and training supervisors. All supervisory-level personnel are trained in facilitating small group discussions, and are sent frequent newsletters and discussion papers on a wide variety of social and public issues to aid them in such discussions, according to Llyle J. Barker, Jr., professor of public relations at Ohio State University and former Army Major General in charge of the Army Public Affairs Office. These information pieces present both pro and con viewpoints and the Army's position on critical issues. In addition, he says, training in face-to-face communication and motivation is a regular part of an officer's skill development program.

The Conference Board reports that more than 60 percent of corporations surveyed have hired outside public relations counsel in the past few years to help with employee communications, including management training. "An often-ignored but critical skill for communicators is listening," says Isobel Parke, APR, senior counsel of Jackson, Jackson & Wagner in Exeter, New Hampshire. "This is a key communication device we try to teach our clients," which include several hospitals.

Boake A. Sells, chairman and CEO of Revco D.S., Inc., a Twinsburg, Ohio-based discount drug chain with 28,000 employees nationwide, tells his managers to "remove the demotivators." Sells advocates that they "show respect by admitting that you don't know everything" and that they are willing to ask for employees' input and advice.

When he came on at Revco in October '87, Sells was the third CEO within little more than a year. There had also been two new management teams, a failed leveraged buyout, a Chapter 11 filing, product out-of-stocks and the closing of 110 stores—a combination tailor-made to throw employee morale into a tailspin. But no significant erosion of the employee base has occurred. And, according to an independent survey of employees conducted last August, 66 percent rate morale as good and more than 80 percent feel well-informed about the Chapter 11 situation and are confident about Revco's future prospects.

To deal with this potentially devastating employee communications challenge, Revco took an integrated approach, using both personalized methods and employee publications to get the word out. The in-

house newsletter, *Scripts*, was jumped from a quarterly to a weekly frequency and changed to a single-topic focus for each issue, to allow for in-depth information. Honest, concerned messages from Sells, along with Q&As that responded to employees' most frequently asked questions on each subject, appeared in the newsletter and letters from the CEO. But in addition, Sells began to make himself available once per quarter for well-publicized call-in programs for employees. For four hours, he sits at a desk answering employee questions phoned in on an 800-number. Questions that need follow-up are referred to department heads.

Only a few days after the bankruptcy filing, a district manager wrote a letter that stated in part: "We've been kept informed all along with Mr. Sells' letters and talks. We have new direction and are ready to get on with business. We are confident that our new leadership will get us back on our feet and back to number one. We've been very open with managers about our financial situation... Everyone appreciated knowing what was going on... I didn't hear a single negative comment."

Taking it from the top

Sells personifies another maxim of personalizing employee communications for maximum impact: That is, that the CEO and other top management must not only be supportive, but involved. As with so many other factors affecting the performance of a company, it is the CEO's attitude about reaching out to employees that sets the tone for all other managers and makes employees either responsive to or cynical about the process.

At ARCO, Orman and his management have initiated "PrimeTime," in which CEO Lod Cook has a monthly, two-hour Q&A session with six employees at one of the company's seven locations. Employee confidence in management, measured before and after the introduction of the feedback program, rose throughout the company. "Employees understand better how they fit in, and their role in the profitability of the company," says Orman.

At Allstate this year, the consumer backlash against the insurance industry in the United States was but one of several major challenges, including: a decision, for the first time in its history, not to renew its license in a state (Massachusetts); the discontinuance of certain Allstate business insurance lines and the sale of its group and health lines; and moves by its parent company, Sears, to change to a discount marketing strategy and to sell the Sears Tower.

"Use of print as a communications tool has been overrated for years"

Focus groups identified six areas of special concern among Allstate employees; then, the company's research center did a telephone survey of more than 500 employees nationwide to gauge the extent of interest in each topic and employees' preferred information methods.

Ultimately, Allstate, headquartered in Northbrook, Illinois, decided to hold a two-hour "Upward Communication" meeting between six employees and the president and chairman of the company, according to Patrick R. Williams, communications consultant for Allstate. The day before the meeting, the six employees met with Allstate corporate relations representatives to discuss the results of the overnight poll and bring up any other topics they thought should be discussed. The meeting was videotaped, and edited down to 22 minutes of highlights. In addition, a special, eight-page issue of one of the company's all-employee publications, *Allstate Now*, presented an expanded version of the dialogue.

Results: Many of the company's 41 regional offices incorporated the video in their immediate communications plans, as a catalyst for discussion and telephone surveys of regional human resources managers have revealed that employees' responses are centering on the comprehensiveness of the meeting and management's candor. Moreover, the latest readership survey for *Allstate Now* showed a credibility ranking of 90 percent. Most important, the spirit of openness and trust that resulted encouraged management to seek employees' input when it was decided to redefine the insurance product to better match customers' needs, Williams reports.

Meanwhile, in dealing with the local problem in Massachusetts, Allstate gave every claim employee in good standing a choice of jobs within the region and set up job fairs that allowed employees to investigate transfer opportunities and to talk face-to-face with senior managers. Susan Addelson, senior communications specialist and editor of *Team*, the company's magazine on personal property and casualty insurance, says she was encouraged to honestly relate the personal stories of affected employees in the magazine. Response from readers lauded the company's commitment to employees.

Consistency counts

Involvement of CEOs and other top managers is important on a routine, as well as crisis, basis. Emanuel encourages top managers to take brown bag lunches with managers, have off-site chats, skip-

Employee communications goals: Use of personal/impersonal methods

Employee Communications Goals	Morale	Internal change	Comp./ benefits	Products	Organization	Ethics	Culture	Ext. bus. envir.	Productivity	Quality orient.	Entrepreneurship	Health/ social	Community
Media used	% of companies using												
Meetings	75%	62%	70%	39%	44%	37%	50%	47%	66%	68%	45%	44%	27%
Employee periodicals	90	86	72	83	84	51	76	81	84	85	54	76	74
Mgt. letters/bulletins	68	88	66	30	68	61	45	48	53	52	28	36	41
Audiovisuals	64	37	49	50	35	22	42	30	52	49	26	25	22

Source: The Conference Board, 1987-'88 survey of 281 major U.S. manufacturing and service firms.

A majority of U.S. corporations surveyed by The Conference Board use meetings to improve morale, convey information about internal change and encourage productivity and quality-consciousness. But employee periodicals and management bulletins—impersonal media—continue to be the main methods relied upon for most communications goals. Audiovisuals are used largely as supplements.

level meetings and other types of "cascading" and two-way communications. "Any way you organize it, the best communication occurs when the boss is out shaking hands and *listening*," he says.

At General Dynamics, the general manager has "walk throughs" and small meetings that allow him to converse with assembly line workers. According to The Conference Board, a growing number of other companies are adopting such methods, including "tool box" sessions between supervisors and workers on the plant floor that focus on specific production problems. Says H-P's Wilcox: "What we used to call 'quality circles' are really 'communications circles.'"

At least once per year, and quarterly or more often wherever possible, companies need to hold "town meetings" with employees, say the experts. At these meetings, senior management should discuss company mission and goals, cite progress, candidly address frustrations and failures and encourage worker input and questions.

Other upward communication

Of course, senior management, or even an individual's immediate supervisor, can't always be on the scene and ready to answer when an employee has a specific question. That's why more companies are adopting standing manager/employee committees or councils and employee-supervised counselor or ombudsman programs.

In some cases, frequent management/employee team meetings are advisable. Princeton Farms, a major mushroom grower based in Princeton, Illinois, found itself in a crisis when an employee was fired and subsequently told the local press that the reason was that he had been trying to start a union. Although management determined that he had actually been fired for work causes, the investigation also revealed that the personnel manager was too overworked to deal with routine personnel matters. A language barrier between managers and the largely Hispanic and Asian employee base had exacerbated the situation. Many employees relied exclusively on rumor or the local papers for information.

Princeton Farms management, with the aid of Chicago-based Aaron D. Cushman and Associates, Inc., established a committee consisting of the general manager, farm manager and the managers of each major department, to come up with a unified policy to deal with employee problems. The committee began meeting weekly to discuss problem areas and make unified decisions on handling them.

Then, an employee committee repre-

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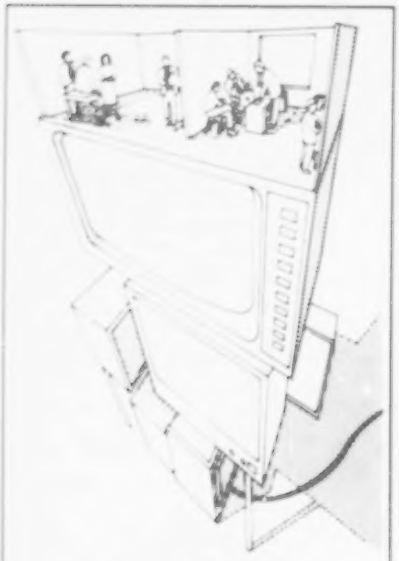

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senting each area of the farm was set up. Larger departments were allotted larger numbers of elected representatives. Each language group was represented.

Six months after the program started, Cushman and management developed an employee attitude survey, which revealed definite morale improvement. A new employee newspaper and increased social and athletic events have complemented the regular meetings. The program won this year's PRSA Silver Anvil in the Internal Communications category.

"Managers assume they're perfectly good at face-to-face—but they're not"

Tassani Communications in Chicago recently instituted an employee "sounding board." Owner Sally Tassani meets with a board of 10 employees once a month. Tassani told *Inc.* magazine that she was very surprised by the results, once she finally asked employees themselves what they want. Instead of more elaborate benefits, for instance, they asked for more access to, and positive reinforcement from, their managers.

More interactive technology

Many organizations are also using forms of communication which, while not always face-to-face, can be more interactive and response-inducing than a publication, and can help fill in any gaps. Employee questions and concerns must be welcomed by supervisors, fed back up the pipeline by any and all means, and answered candidly and promptly.

Suggestion systems and speak-out programs are increasingly common. IBM uses a mail-in system, "Speak Up," which allows employees to get individual responses to questions from high-level managers while maintaining their anonymity. Employees indicate their names and addresses, but these are removed by the "Speak Up" director and kept separately. When an appropriate executive has supplied an answer, it is mailed to the employee's home. Alternately, the employee may request a face-to-face or telephone response. Many large companies, including Anheuser-Busch and Eastman Kodak, now have similar programs.

Some companies have telephone systems that record anonymous employees' questions and feedback for use by management, public relations and human resources, as well as regularly conducted employee surveys. Where affordable, radio or videotaped news and comment shows with feedback opportunities elicit positive response from employees.

Telephone answer lines and kiosks continue to be quite popular in areas such as benefits, where many employees do not take the time to read a manual, but want their questions answered.

An electronic medium was recently employed at the Tennessee Valley Authority, the nation's largest producer of electric power. New directions from a new chairman, Marvin Runyon, called for a commitment to new organizational values, a major reorganization and a downsizing that eliminated 20 percent of TVA's jobs. Along with extensive job placement efforts, TVA board members conveyed consistent messages to 33,000 permanent workers and 4,000 contract workers *before* the media broke the stories (learning company news from the media first had become a major employee complaint), via satellite technology that carried major speeches across the entire valley. These were TVA's first-ever company-wide meetings.

The program's success caused top management to become more aware of how proactive employee communication would benefit the organization. As part of TVA's reorganization, the head of Governmental & Public Affairs began reporting directly to the chairman of the board.

Inter-department cooperation

Personalized tools and systems for two-way communications between managers and employees can stimulate critical enthusiasm and loyalty vital to success in today's marketplace. But internal communications professionals emphasize that successfully implementing them requires cooperation with human resources and other departments.

"When we become effective at these processes, we'll be able to write our own tickets—maybe," says Whitworth. "But we'll have to team up with other corporate specialists—maybe do co-training with public affairs, for example. We have to make communicators realize the need to give up some control to gain greater advantage. Getting things done with people is the key. We need to become counselors, as in other areas of public relations, rising above the technical 'doer' level."

Adds Emanuel: "The professionals who master this challenge will have incredible opportunities in the future." □

E. Zoe McCathrin, APR, is assistant professor at Kent State's School of Journalism and Mass Communications. Her public relations experience includes having been vice president, public relations at Banc-Ohio National Bank.

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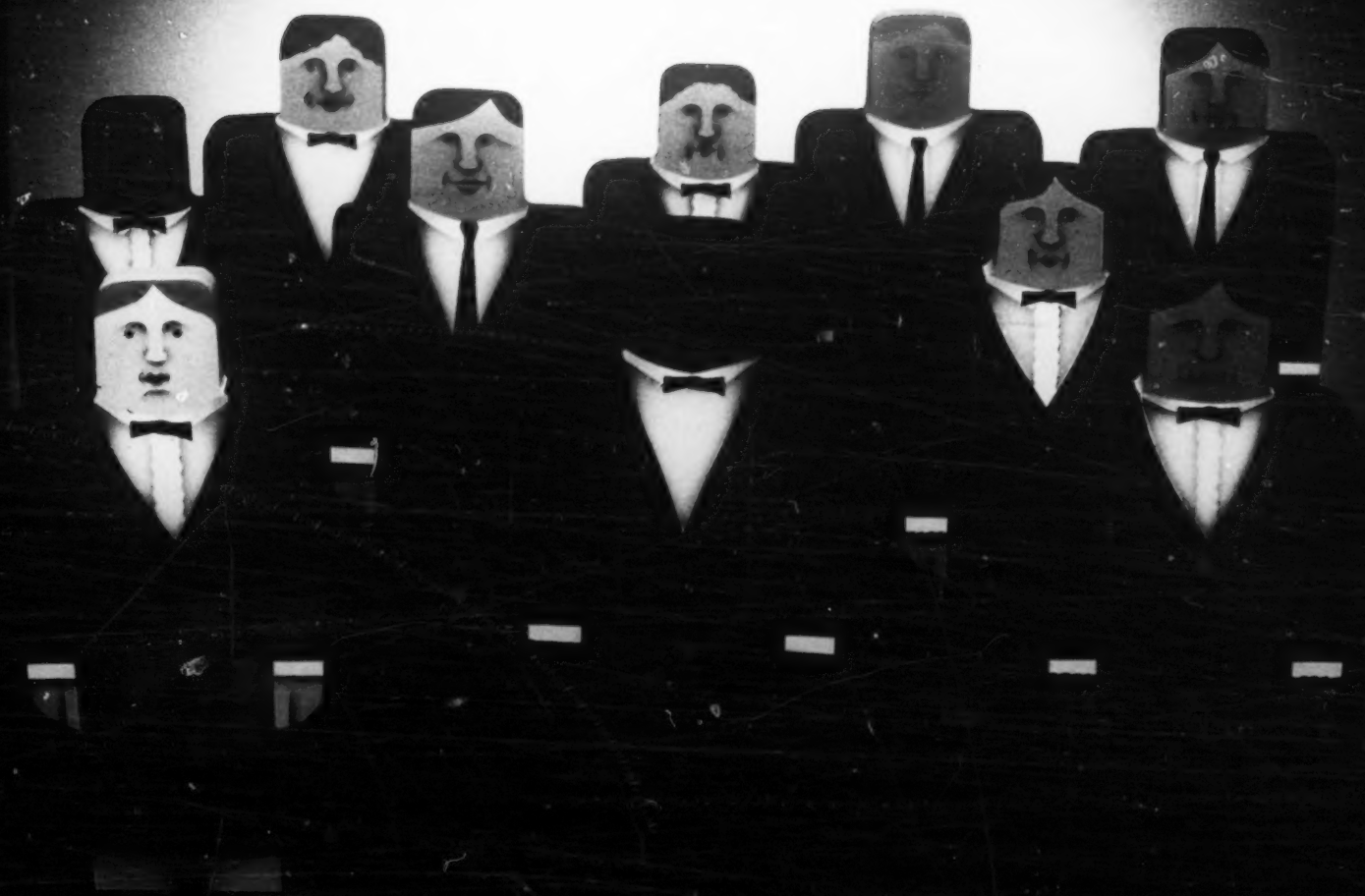

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Minorities continue to be underrepresented in public relations and frustrated about being pigeonholed in jobs in which they communicate with their own minority groups. Now, minority action and proposals by leaders in the field, combined with employers' realization that work force diversity will be one of the major business realities of the next decade, are bringing minority issues into the spotlight. Will this impetus succeed in accelerating change?

Marilyn Kern-Foxworth

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Brand managers are legendary for their determination and single-minded devotion to the product (some call it obsession). Successful marketing public relations professionals must learn to pysche out these key players and fulfill their every need. Two experts provide a game plan.

Joan Aho Ryan, APR and George H. Lemmond

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INSIDE TRACK

A Soviet perspective

Glasnost's breaking out all over. When Nicolai N. Melnikov, vice president of the U.S.S.R.'s Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was in New York to accept a Silver Anvil for the very successful Soviet Trade Exhibition held last December, I spoke with him about future plans for promoting Soviet commerce and about his impressions of public relations as practiced in the United States.

According to Melnikov, trade exhibition plans are ongoing; the goal is to draw more companies to participate—particularly large ones. Whereas the Soviets formerly concentrated on providing foreign companies with general information about business and industry in the U.S.S.R., he said, the emphasis now is decidedly sales-oriented. "We are trying to show concrete results. We are concentrating on showing only products that can actually be sold abroad." Melnikov, whose words were translated by Victor Solodov, assistant vice president of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Trade and Economic Council, noted that some participating Soviet companies may find it necessary to change their products to successfully market them here. "In my opinion," he mused, "even if they fail initially, it could be a good marketing lesson for them."

He seemed pleased to report that, since Soviet law was changed in April to allow 45,000 companies to export directly rather than go through the Soviet Trade Ministry, more than 2,500 companies have registered to do so. Previously, only 200 firms exported, he said. "Now, the second stage, which is crucial to our country, is to prepare marketing specialists to sell in foreign markets. We will need to train and manage our own people and also attract specialists from other countries. In this sphere, public relations and exhibitions are very important."

Melnikov admitted to still being a bit fuzzy on defining public relations, adding that the Soviet government uses many of the same methods used in the United States in areas such as media relations and employee communications. "These are common sense approaches," he said. But, he noted, two experiences in this country, in particular, did give him a "new and refreshing perspective" on the field. "In viewing the winners at the awards dinner, it struck me that public relations is much broader than I'd realized," he said. "The areas dealt with by the winners encompassed everything from water preservation to issues involving retired people. It's clear that, using all of the different methods of public relations, it's possible to get good results in many fields. Now, I want to know much more about public relations."

In addition, he said, he was struck by a definition of public relations offered to him by Jim Dowling, president and CEO of Burson-Marsteller, which handled the exhibition for the Soviets. "He said that the mission of public relations is creating the most favorable atmosphere possible for good business," said Melnikov, smiling and nodding approval.

Karlene Lukovitz, Editor

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WORKSHOP

Maximizing trade show exposure

Ralph W. McGreevy

The old image of trade shows as being mainly social events is dead and gone. Today, they are recognized as essential components in a balanced marketing program. They exist to facilitate the purchase and sale of goods and services. Budgets hinge on results: expenses must be justified.

Trade show programs and public relations share many common elements. They are both components of the promotional mix and they often share the same messages and act as one of the few, or only, representatives of their organization. Frequently, both seek measurable results. With all this in common, it's hard to believe that public relations and trade show professionals don't interact more often.

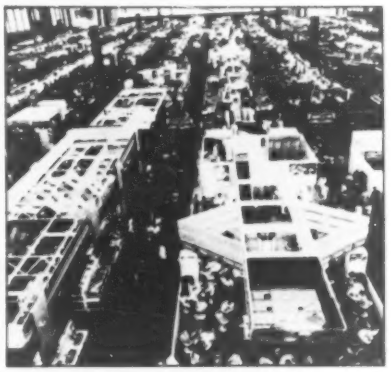
Yet, when I recently moderated a seminar on the subject of public relations and the trade show at "The Exhibitor Show '89," the trade show industry's largest educational conference on trade show marketing, and asked a group of about 50 corporate exhibit managers whether their in-house or firm public relations counsel assisted in either the strategic planning or implementation of their trade show promotions, there was only one positive response.

In progressive organizations, trade show and public relations practitioners should interact whenever possible. It behooves the public relations counsel, either corporate or firm, to initiate the building of administrative and budgetary bridges to link these functions for the benefit of both.

When an industry's suppliers and several hundred or more direct customers meet in the street market environment of a trade show, it presents the savvy public relations practitioner with many unique opportunities. You must understand and appreciate the full extent of the publicity opportunities presented at your company's or client's trade shows.

There are three reasons public relations practitioners should become involved in a trade show program. The astute practitioner can:

- reinforce the company's sales message at the show and enhance immediate show participation;
- extend the publicity windfall associated with show participation via pre- and post-show publicity;
- use the on-site exposure as a high visibility/high interest base to pursue and achieve other public relations goals.



"Stories placed in local and regional media covering a host city can increase booth traffic"

Counseling the team

Although trade shows last only a few days, the coordinated effort of planning the participation and the various promotions should occur at least three to five months prior to show dates. One of the best ways to start is to contact the trade show organizer and review the plans for show promotion. Show management is usually interested in the same audiences you are: attendees and the media. Playing off their efforts can be beneficial.

Once you understand the basic plan of the show organizer, you can devise your own plan. This process should involve many individuals, including: R&D personnel, product and sales managers, the advertising manager, exhibit manager and other public relations counsel. Public relations practitioners, either firm or in-house, might find their presence to be new to the exhibit "team." Nonetheless, their advice should be integral to the coordination of promotional projects surrounding the exhibit, including the formulation of the major messages that will set the promotional tone. Though the vehicles used will vary, the main goal is always to establish a clear image through continuity. To ensure this continuity, three phases of planning are necessary: pre-show, show and post-show.

■ Establish pre-show interest.

The public relations practitioner has a variety of ways to approach the task of trade show publicity. Planned pre-show promotion can help ensure that attendees will be looking for your firm's booth during the show, and creates a foundation for communicating your desired message to attending media.

A series of direct mail pieces will help establish interest among potential attendees and provide the vehicle for communicating any on-site promotions. Many firms build pre-show excitement by offering at-booth giveaways, vacations, product demonstrations, celebrity appearances and other enticements. Promotions should be related to the product or theme being exhibited, and have some news or novelty value.

Familiarizing yourself with key industry trade media is essential during the pre-show stage. Most of the industry's major publications will probably cover the show. Since one story angle will not suit all media, you should develop a variety of angles for different editorial needs.

Contact your media sources well in advance of the show to establish initial relations, and again several times closer to the show. Discuss their needs and search for a fit as it relates to your firm's show participation. In addition, take the time to formalize your invitation to the media.

Trade publications will often save their

trade show material for one pre-show issue. While it can be difficult to fight this trend among editors, you should explore ways that can get your story into print several times prior to that issue. Some suggestions include:

• Offer "exclusive," timely information on your company in advance of the pre-show issue. For example, offer a "new products" exclusive to the key book if you plan on introducing new products or services at the show.

• Discuss the current "hot" issues in your industry and how they will be addressed by your firm. Some examples: your company is sponsoring a guest speaker or seminar on a timely industry topic; one of your firm's personnel is chairing a session; or, your firm will be exhibiting products that offer solutions to industry problems. Emphasize that more information will be available at your booth.

• Create a memorable pre-show promotion that can lay the groundwork for your cause with key editors. As hundreds of pre-show stories begin crossing their desks, a clever direct mail piece may be one element that sets your firm and your story apart.

You're fighting the editor's natural inclination to pigeonhole your story for the pre-show issue, so it's necessary to work twice as hard to communicate its importance and timeliness. By knowing a publication's editorial calendar, and discussing the book's needs with the editor well in advance, you can do much to find the proper fit for your story in a key publication.

■ Use on-site contacts.

At show time, your firm's booth can be one in a sea of hundreds, each with a different story to tell. Your on-site messages must be unique and newsworthy.

Bring a large supply of press kits for the show's press room. Your kit should have material pertinent to the show, such as information on new products and technology introduced at your booth, but don't neglect including your total company (or client) message in your kit.

Stop by the press room periodically, and introduce yourself and the kit to members of the media. One of the biggest advantages to linking public relations with the trade show is the chance to meet editors at the show site. Establishing these personal relationships with editors can assist in gaining placements long after the show ends.

Trade shows are traditionally associated with the introduction of a new or improved product or service. An outstanding product demonstration at your booth might be a great photo opportunity, so consider hiring a photographer and alerting media.

If you have high-interest news to communicate, plan on holding a press conference. Normally, this can take place either at your booth during show hours or off premises. Be aware that most show managements will ask you not to schedule an off-premises event that conflicts with show hours. A breakfast conference is one option.

If you are not introducing a new product, explore other creative ways of beating the drum loudly for your company or client. If an employee is presenting a paper, or chairing a conference, it's possible to position the firm as an expert source of information. You can also directly involve editors or key prospective clients. Some tactics to achieve this:

• Schedule interviews with company personnel. In addition to executives, consider R&D people, product managers and others;

• Create editorial roundtables, chaired by a chief industry leader;

• Provide paid keynote speakers as a feature attraction for an off-site function;

• Formally sponsor coffee breaks, lunches, breakfasts or hospitality suites for editors and key prospects, or informal gatherings, dinners and "nights out" during the show.

When planning your promotions and publicity, don't forget media in the host city and its surrounding region. Studies have shown that a significant number of attendees at a trade show come from the area adjacent to the show site. Stories placed in local and regional media can increase booth traffic.

■ Follow up with contacts.

When the show ends, publicity opportunities don't. Consider submitting to media: photos of your exhibit and displays, rewrites or transcripts of technical papers or speeches given by company personnel and copies of press kits to editors who could not attend. Thank you notes and follow-up calls are always in order, both as a courtesy and to help answer any last-minute questions.

Use media contacts you've established at the show as springboards for longer-term public relations goals. Editors who have shown interest in a new product or service are obviously excellent publicity prospects for future, related introductions.

Cost effectiveness: trade shows vs. sales calls

	Trade shows	Industrial sales call
How many follow-up calls must you make to book an order?	0.8	4.6
How much must you spend to reach a prospect?	$133	$252
How much will it cost to book an order?	334	1,158
What is the cost to book an order from a new customer?	334	1,490

Source: Trade Show Bureau survey of exhibiting companies in 1987; McGraw-Hill Laboratory of Advertising Performance, 1987.

The trade show can offer a significant bottom-line impact—one worthy of a concerted public relations effort.

Factors influencing trade show-related purchases

Production information	% planning to buy
Publication editorial	72
Exhibitors	67
Direct mail	66
Advertisements	66
Guest tickets	65
Friend/associate	56

Source: Survey of 13 expositions in 1988 by Exhibit Surveys, Inc., Red Bank, New Jersey.

Editorial support for a trade show program yields impressive results. Of those attendees who found out about a trade show through editorial coverage, 72 percent were planning to buy one or more of the products exhibited.

Ralph W. McGreevy is general manager of A-B Communications, a marketing communications firm in Hudson, Ohio serving clients in the trade show industry. He is also vice chairman of public relations for the National Association of Exposition Managers.